

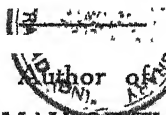
BEHOLD THE BRIDEGROOM COMETH.

An exposition of Christ's teachings on His absence in and return from Heaven. With a presentation of evidence from the Scriptures and from human affairs on Earth, of the infallible signs of the impending return of Christ.

By

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"THE CLIMAX OF THE AGES"
"CREATION AND ITS SEQUEL"

"In My Father's House are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14: 2, 3.)

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PREFACE.

That the present times are troubled and anxious ones needs no further demonstration than that presented by the facts of life in every country on Earth. The existing universal depression is altogether exceptional in its extensive area and "perplexing" as to its cause, although it is not an isolated experience with living mankind, not to mention previous generations. Nothing could be truer to the facts of human life in every generation than the words of Romans 8:22: "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." That there is a beneficent Divine Purpose in all this suffering with every subject, and that all the Times of human history bringing their different experiences and lessons are of the same Divine Purpose, is the instructed and unwavering faith of the writer of this exposition.

This Work is sent forth as a confession of faith and as a helping hand to others on the revealed truth of Christ's absence in and return from Heaven. The particular parables spoken by Christ in these connections, with the associated matters of the enlightened standing and experiences of His living people at His return, comprise the matter of this exposition. It is our earnest conviction from evidences presented, particularly in the last section of this Work, that the present "distress of Nations" is an infallible sign given by Christ Himself of His return being "at the doors." Hence the designation of this exposition agrees with the great theme considered in it, "BEHOLD THE BRIDEGROOM COMETH."

The writer of this Work has in a previous one, "Creation and its Sequel," presented a more extensive exposition of the whole Divine Purpose from Eternity to Eternity. The present Work is in agreement with the Plan elaborated in this previous and bigger Work, to which latter the interested reader is referred.

Grateful recognition is here made of the loyal co-operation of those sharing with the writer the fellowship and service of the truth, and this means of its confession and circulation.

BEHOLD, THE BRIDEGROOM COMETH.

I.

“THE GREAT PREACHER OF PARABLES.”

This designation applies to Christ, because all His wonderful preaching, teaching, was in parables of different kinds. Indeed one of the prophesied marks of the Son speaking in the last days was this particular form of address. In Matt 13. 34, 35 there is this dual matter of Christ's speaking in parables, and of this being a fulfilment of prophecy concerning Him. “All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake He not unto them. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophet, saying, I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.” This prophecy is in Psalm 78. 2, with associated reference in Psalm 49. 1, 4. If Israel had been in a right attitude the arresting fact of the preaching in parables wholly by Christ, would have made convincing appeal as one striking mark of the great Messiah.

In Mark 4: 33, 34 there is further explanation of this method which serves to remove any causes for mistaken theories in this connection. “And with many such parables spake He the Word unto them, as they were able to hear it. But without a parable spake He not unto them; and when they were alone He expounded all things to His disciples.” The difference between the multitudes and the disciples in this matter was that the latter received private explanations of the spoken parables, and not as may appear to be suggested in some references, that only the multitudes were preached to in parables. Together with the disciples hearing the parables spoken in public, and others spoken only to disciples and not to the multitudes, there is in John 16: 25 and in the associations of the Last Supper this summary by Christ: “These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs (parables); but the time cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father.”

The matter of the private tuition of the disciples and such comments on the passing by of the multitudes as those of Matt. 13: 10, 16, does not—as is often injuriously surmised that it does—reveal any arbitrary appointment or Divine election. If any or all of the

multitudes addressed by Christ had manifested the same anxiety to understand as that shown by the disciples, Christ would have been as glad to enlighten them as He was with the little band of anxious seekers. This is proved beyond question or doubt by Christ's later lament and tears over their refusal to be taught and to accept Him, recorded in Matt. 23: 37; Luke 19. 41, 44. "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." There was not any respect of persons with Him. This "would not" in Matt 23: 37 is the real significance of all such references as John 12. 39, where the words are "could not," and the matter is a quotation from Isaiah 6: 10: "Therefore they could not believe" As clearly revealed in Christ's tears and lament, and in His exposition of Isaiah's prophecy in Matt. 13: 14, 15, the "could not" resulted from "would not"; from deeply rooted prejudice and unbelief blinding the eyes and making dull the ears. It was the could not of wilful hostility and not of inability or of Divine appointment.

This presentation of Christ as the Great Preacher of parables and of all His preaching being in this manner of address, in the Gospels, brings prominent the materials intended in the reference in Heb. 1: 1, 2: "God, Who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." All this speaking by the Son and in parables only was for the generations of the last days, and the basis and exposition of the Divine cause on Earth for the same last days. The New Testament, which records this speaking of the Son, together with the facts of His first appearing and its work, comprises the Testimony of the Son, as distinguished from the Word of the Father in the Old Testament. In such Scriptures as Rev. 20: 4, and in the definition of the basis of faith of Christ's people, these distinct but inseparably connected parts of Inspiration are thus mentioned: "And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the Word of God."

As declared in Matt. 13: 34, 35, the matters of Christ's preaching in parables had been previously secret or hidden, unrevealed, from the foundation of the world. The one great World or order of all Scripture reference is the human race. It was this World that God so loved as to give His Son for its redemption and salvation. From the commencement of human history to Christ's ministry, the Great Salvation offered to the believing of mankind in the Gospel of the Son was secret or hidden. And Christ came to make this both manifest and available to all willing to believe in Him and in His message.

It would indeed be extraordinary if Christ's method of revealing secret things was of a kind which effectively concealed them from those desirous of understanding them; or if another method than the one employed by Him would have better assisted understanding. Christ preached in parables because that was the most powerful and illuminating method of revealing the profound truths of His new and due Revelation. It is certain that if the more than sixty

parables of the new Kingdom had not been utilised, and the truths illustrated in their similitudes and narratives had been presented as plain teaching, understanding by anxious seekers would have been made more difficult. It was to help and not to hinder that the parabolic method was adopted by the Great Preacher.

All other writings of the New Testament are elaborations of Christ's Gospel of the Kingdom and not in any way substitutes. Infinite wisdom is bound up in the Divine purpose of the Gospel Age and its Great Salvation, and this cannot be made simple in the presentation by the Son. To make simple people wise is the designed purpose of Christ's parables. In a like connection there is this reference in 1st Cor. 2 7, 8: "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery. . . Which none of the Princes of this world knew."

After speaking His parables there was need for further exposition of their themes to bring understanding to listeners, but apart from the parables this later service would not have had the desired results. The public preaching, with its tender and graceful appeals and invitations to the people of Israel, was designed to draw the ignorant, anxious and humble to One Who was desirous of giving rest to the weary and light to them that sat in darkness. No wisdom or ability was required in accepting the great Preacher as the Lord's Anointed, and all thus coming to Him were led into the paths of wisdom and prepared for entrance into the Kingdom of His parables when it was later opened at Pentecost.

The many references in the Epistles of the class of Ephes. 1:17-18, Ephes. 3:16-19, have as their materials of upbuilding the preaching of the Son in the parables of the Kingdom. Only in these did He speak, and only by understanding His speaking is there the bringing to the Father by the Son. "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. The eyes of your understanding being enlightened. . . . That ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." All this is but referring to the profound speaking of the Son as the great means of wisdom and fellowship, hence has not anything vague in its composition. The Epistles are helps to the understanding of the Gospel of the Kingdom in Christ's parables, but do not take the place of His personal and diversified message to mankind.

All the truth of the Kingdom of Heaven is contained in the parables of the Son, but is only available to human understanding as there is manifested in Gentile seekers, that attitude first required with Israel, as in Christ's thanks to the Father recorded in Matt. 11: 25: "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." It was the Father's will that the secret things of the Kingdom to be spoken by the Son would be in parables, and only available to those whom He regarded as worthy of understanding. Such wisdom in the disciples as permitted the disclosing of "due truth" to them was Christ's gift to all humble seekers. Together

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with the numerous evidences of the imparting of this gift to His followers during His ministry there are such as the matters of Luke 24: 25, 27, 45 in the associations succeeding His resurrection "Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures!"

And when He departed from the Earth and from His newly-established little Cause of the Kingdom He made all arrangements for the effective teaching of the humble and anxious of all generations in the secret things revealed in His parables of the Kingdom. Not any have been left ignorant of the due truth for their times in the parables wherever His Gospel has gone and where there has been the required condition of mind shown. In the section of this work on "The parable of the faithful and wise steward" there is consideration of these appointed methods for gathering and building up believers in His Gospel.

The Kingdom of Heaven which Christ preached and illustrated in all His parables, and which He announced as being "at hand," was later opened on the day of Pentecost to believing Israelites by the preaching of Peter. This Kingdom is identical with the matter of Heb. 2: 3, where the Divine Cause brought and expounded by Christ is referred to as a "Great Salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him." In agreement with previous prophecy Israel was the first to receive the truth and offer of inheritance of the new Kingdom, and this as an exclusive offer if all Israel then living on Earth had accepted the Divine beneficence. Only on the refusal of all Israel—save a remnant—in all lands of the Earth, as in the Holy Land, was it taken from them and offered to the Gentiles, as forecasted by Christ in Matt. 21: 43, and confirmed by Paul in Rom. 9:30, 31; Rom 11:11, 12, 25, and connected Scriptures

Although all Christ's parables were expositions of this Kingdom, of necessity there are involved matters and associations mentioned in them which are quite distinct from the Kingdom itself. This seeming paradox finds explanation in a representative illustration from one parable. In Matt. 13. 24, 30 there is the parable of the Wheat and Tares, and which comprehends the Gospel Age in its forecast and definitions. Correctly speaking, and as stressed in verse 24, only the good seed and its growth and harvest comprise the Kingdom features as results of the first sowing in the field of the **World**. But the three stages of sowing, growing and reaping of the Wheat have their duplicates with the Tares, because these latter are also results of the presence of the new Kingdom on Earth.

The parables of Christ are divided into two kinds or classes by the One that spake them. Each of these kinds has great variety as expressing unity in diversity. Only one kind or class has the prefix placed before it in the form of. "Like or likened unto the Kingdom of Heaven." Since all the parables are expositions of the Kingdom or of the Divine cause on Earth established by the Son, the use of this prefix before some parables and not before others arrests the attention. Christ manifestly intended this prefix as emphasizing the

exact likeness in all features with the reality intended in its use, with each parable of this kind. The absence of this prefix with other parables clearly intimates that together with the features of similitude there are others not like the Kingdom. These latter features are clearly responsible for the absence of the explanatory matter of being "Likened unto the Kingdom," but these also have important bearing on the exact matters of similitude in the same parables. There is not any mere word painting, unimportant narrative or superfluous matter of any kind in the several scores of parables of the Great Preacher.

As declared in John 20. 31, the things written in the Gospels of what the Son was, said, and did, are the matters to be understood and believed as proofs of His Sonship, and as the means of receiving the promise of Life Eternal. "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His Name." Christ as the Son and His Gospel of the Kingdom is revealed in His "teaching in parables." And the same Son and His Gospel are elaborated in all other writings of the New Testament. In Coloss 2. 3 there is this declaration: "In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." The great evidence of both these latter available to human understanding is that supplied in Christ's parables. Any human theories which seek to reduce the parables of Christ to mystical matters without definite authority, or lacking in doctrinal teaching, are destructive of faith in Christ as the Son of God. Only those misled by false doctrine affirm the highly injurious but popular fallacy, "that parables must never be used as the basis of doctrine." The truth is that all doctrines of the Kingdom of Heaven were first and fully revealed by Christ in His parables, and are only elaborations in other writings of the New Testament of Christ's Gospel. The doctrine of the Second Advent; of the Kingdom of the Son in power and glory and its Ages and universal results; forgiveness of sins; justification by faith; the imputing of righteousness to the sinful subjects of Divine grace, with all other doctrines of the "Faith of Christ," were first spoken by the Lord in His profound and beautiful parables of the Kingdom.

The two marked exceptions in Christ's preaching, and where there was not any use of similitudes or narratives formed to illustrate the truths intended, are the Sermon on the Mount and the last great Prophecy on Olivet. The first of these finds record in Matt. 5: 6, 7 chapters. No careful and candid reader of this Sermon but has recognised its profound character, and that even in the sections where no illustrations are used the term **proverbs** is an appropriate one for defining the words of wisdom spoken. "**Speaking plainly**," such as obtains in some sections of this Sermon, becomes, by the profound character of the matters spoken and by the natural density of human nature, **parabolic**. Few readers of Christ's Sermon on the Mount, in every generation of the Age, have fully understood the dual application of the exalted moral code and standard it presents. Christ's law of conduct and life presented in

this Sermon far exceeds in its requirements from mankind those in the Law given to Israel at Sinai, and this latter was beyond the ability of sinful human nature to obey, as stressed in such Scriptures as Rom. 3. 19, 20. The wonderful truth of this Sermon was that the Son was defining His Law for the Coming Age of His Kingdom, and the obedience of man universal then subject to Him, in conjunction with the defined reasonable and possible course of life to His own followers of the present Age. And with these two sections of plain speaking there is a third and large one occupied with a series of diverse comparisons, similitudes (Matt. 7. 13, 29).

In Chapters 24, 25 of Matthew's Gospel and contemporary ones in Mark and Luke, Christ's great Prophecy on Olivet is recorded. The section of this which can be designated "plain speaking" as being without any illustrative matters, is that of Matt. 24: 1, 41. The human cause or means of calling forth this profound Prophecy were the three questions by the disciples recorded in Matt. 24: 3. Christ's Prophecy was not limited to, although it included the answers to these questions, but was an exhaustive forecast of the affairs of mankind of the Gospel Age and to His Second Advent.

To affirm that this plain speaking in the Prophecy is that of proverbs to the human mind, demanding concentration of the mind and wholehearted desire to understand, is but to utter a truism well known to all students of the Bible. It is certain that Christ answered the questions as they ought to be dealt with, but it is equally so that His replies are not easy of understanding, and that prejudice and private theories will hinder this. The fact that the answers are not given in the same order as the questions were put; that the last question is answered first, and the first question second, further presents to each reader the need for thinking deeply and for seeking the guidance of the Divine Spirit. The different tribulation associated with the answer to the first question given in Matt. 24: 21, 22, to that of the Era of the second one answered in verse 29, are also matters of profound import, and calling for "rightly dividing of the Word of truth." The disciples had not the least conception of the immensities involved in their questions when presenting these for Christ to answer. And only studious minds, assisted by Divine help, have been enabled and privileged to follow Christ's forecasts and understand them.

Thus even the strictly literal matters of the great Prophecy on Olivet are not understood in the same application by Bible students, but are the causes of as great differences of beliefs as those of the parables and their significance. And all this evidences that truths illustrated in narrative and comparison, and truths presented apart from these, alike only appeal with enlightenment to those that seek, knock and ask with importunity, as in Luke 11: 9, 10. Exactly the same with the great Prophecy as with the Sermon on the Mount, a large and concluding section is devoted to the presenting of beautiful and profound parables. (Matt. 24: 42-51; Matt. 25: 1-46.) Indeed it is true that "without a parable spake He not unto them."

II.

**“THE PARABLE OF THE WAITING AND
WATCHING SERVANTS.”**

This parable, with the connected one of “the good man of the house,” is presented in Luke 12:36-39. It has particular and peculiar prominence because it was the first intimation and illustration of the matter of Christ’s return, or Second Advent, given by Him to the disciples. It was evidently spoken some time before the end of His ministry, and possibly about the middle, and thus prepared for the later parables of the same return contained in the last great Prophecy on Olivet. It was in the associations of this first parable of the return that the question as to its application was presented by Peter, on behalf of the listening disciples, and which evidenced that the matter was new and startling. “Then Peter said unto Him, Lord, speakest Thou this parable unto us, or even unto all?” Not any such questions arose when the same subject was the matter of prophecy and parable during the last week of His ministry. Indeed, and as previously noted, one of the three questions calling forth the great Prophecy on Olivet, spoken just before Christ’s death, was that of Matt. 24:3: “What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the Age?” This coming or return had been in the minds of the disciples from the previous time, when Christ had spoken the parables of Luke 12:36-39, and was revived again in their remembrance during this last week of the ministry by the public reference to it by Christ, and recorded in Matt. 23:38, 39: “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord.” This public utterance by Christ was one cause of the later questions by the disciples which called forth His great Prophecy, as it revived in their minds the previously spoken parables of the coming return.

As intimated in Luke 12:22, and again in verse 32, Christ addressed the disciples in the parables ending with verse 48, although large multitudes of the people of Israel were also present and listening to the exposition. “And He said unto His disciples” marks the commencement of the exposition leading up to the parables in verse 22, and in verse 32 there is the further matter of “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.” In these personal appeals to disciples, with the later parables of verses 36-48, there was intimated that the matters spoken only appealed to His own followers, although heard also by the assembled multitude. All these latter had equal opportunity to manifest interest in the spoken parables with the disciples, as all Gentiles hearing them in later times have had. But when no evidence of interest was shown by the listening multitude Christ gave a particular parable to them, which had no application to disciples, and which is recorded in Luke 12:54-59, commencing with, “And He said also to the people.”

In introducing the parables of His **return** and in the section commencing in Luke 12 22-35, there is frequent use of the pronouns **ye, you, your, yourselves**, with the appeals to the disciples to maintain a waiting and ready attitude of life. In verse 35 there is a summary of all previous appeals and the introduction to the first parable, "Let **your** loins be girded about and **your** lights be burning." Without any break or change of subject Christ proceeds to outline a similitude for His disciples to imitate, and in this first presents the matter of His Own return. "And **ye** yourselves like unto Men that wait for their lord, when **he** will return from the wedding, that when **he** cometh and knocketh they may open unto him immediately." It is striking that in the first mention of His Own return to His disciples He presents this as illustrated in that of another lord to his servants, and commends the waiting attitude of these latter as worthy of imitation by His Own followers. In agreement with the illustrative matter of the parable thus introduced in verse 36, there is in it the use of other pronouns in application to the other persons of the parable. In verse 36 there is the use of "their, they"; in verse 37, "these, they," and in verse 38, "those servants."

After speaking the two parables of Luke 12 36, 39, and as a first answer to Peter's question of verse 40, Christ again uses the personal pronoun **Ye** in commending the waiting, watching and ready attitude for the imitation of all His followers. "Be ye therefore ready also (like the servants in the parable), for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not" (like the lord of the parable). But not until after speaking these two parables did Christ explain what He meant in His previous appeals for their "loins to be girded, and their lights to be burning," and that this was for the "return or coming of the Son of Man"—Himself. Since He was known to the disciples as this Son of Man, and that He was already come into the world and to His own people Israel, then, this first mention and illustration of another coming, a return of Himself, was a new and startling matter to His living followers. It is a great mistake to suppose that Christ's disciples understood from the commencement of His ministry and without any direct teaching from Him, that their Master was to leave the Earth again after His appearing and for a long time, with a subsequent return from Heaven to establish His Kingdom.

All these disciples believed Him to be the promised Messiah and Son of God, but they shared the prevailing Jewish belief that when Messiah appeared on Earth He would abide here for ever and not again leave the Earth. This "belief finds expression in John 12; 24, and in reply to Christ's reference to Himself as "Son of Man" and to His "lifting up" in death on the cross. "The people answered Him, We have heard out of the Law that Christ abideth for ever; and how sayest Thou, the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?" To the unbelieving Jews the death of Christ proved that He was not Messiah, and this unexpected matter sorely tried the faith of the disciples until His resurrection, when they became the first to recognise and believe the infallible proof of His

Sonship, which has been shared by every enlightened believer since. Christ's isolated resurrection from the dead and from death to Eternal life and glory, was the proof first presented by Peter at Pentecost, and later to the Gentiles by Paul, of the Sonship of Jesus and realisation of the promises of God through all the Prophets. (Acts 2: 30, 32; Acts 10: 40, 43; Acts 13: 32, 33; Acts 26: 23, etc.)

Thus, the first presentation of His own return in the illustrative matter of a parable was calculated to arouse some queries and much anxiety of mind as to its meaning in the minds of the Jewish disciples. And although the matter entered and continued with these early followers through His ministry, and was further confirmed by the later parables at the end, the disciples had no real belief in or understanding either of His departure or return until after His Ascension to Heaven in their sight. Some considerable time after speaking the parables of Luke 12: 36, 48, and some six months before His death, the due time arrived for revealing His approaching death at Jerusalem and rising again the third day. (Matt. 20: 17, 19; Mark 10: 32, 34; Luke 18: 31, 34.) How powerful are the words in this connection! "They understood none of these things, and this saying was hid from them." The disciples did not see any connection between His death and resurrection and the previously expounded departure and return of the Son of Man. All their talk on these profound matters during and at the end of His ministry, and on to His Ascension, was akin to the state of the blind man partially restored to sight by Christ and mentioned in Mark 8: 22, 24: "I see men as trees walking." With these first disciples as with all later ones it was and is as declared in Mark 4: 33 that "He spake the Word unto them as they were able to hear it."

The utter dismay of the disciples at the death of Christ; their doubts of His resurrection, even when told of it by the women who had seen the risen Lord; their question of doubt and confusion on the day of Ascension recorded in Acts 1: 6: "Wilt Thou at this time restore the Kingdom again to Israel?"—were all disclosures of a bewildered state of mind seeing nothing clearly save Love for Him. This state was unavoidable and could only be altered by the experiences later coming to them as the result of His death, resurrection and entrance into glory. Christ's disciples were the best materials that human nature could provide for being moulded into the image of the Heavenly.

This parable of the waiting and watching servants in Luke 12: 36, 38, although only comprising three verses, is most comprehensive in including all believers of the Gospel Age in its two definitions, together with the departure, absence and return of the Lord. The use and application of Ye in Christ's exhortation in verse 40 is as comprehensive as His people of the whole Age. "Be ye therefore ready also," knows no exceptions and is not limited to any particular persons or times. It is exactly parallel with Hebrews 1: 2: "Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son."

III.

"THE SERVANTS WAITING FOR THEIR LORD."

"And ye yourselves like unto Men that wait for their lord when he will return from the wedding," at once fixes the attention both on an absent lord and on his servants waiting for his return to them and his own house. Although not any particulars are given of the departure from home and his servants of the lord of this parable, the matters spoken involve many of these, and were so intended by the Great Preacher, to be found by diligent study. Although this lord's wedding is prominently placed in the parable his bride or wife has neither mention nor incidental place in the illustration. From its commencement, and with the waiting of the servants for the known return of their lord, there is disclosed an instructed state, which designedly involves their lord's commands being given previous to his departure. Only such wisdom as Christ possessed could compress into a few words the intended truths of this profound parable, and without leaving any scope for mere human speculations.

Christ was the Great Preacher, and was always original both in matter and method. All the narratives of His parables were His Own creation, and were not adopted by Him from then current history. In His illustrative uses of physical and inanimate nature He was not limited by any existing laws or conditions in His comparisons with the Kingdom, although all such parables disclose knowledge of this domain of the works of His Father beyond that possessed by any other Teacher. Christ's narratives in their eastern setting, and apart from any adoption of current history, are made illuminating to all seeking minds of all generations by their intensely human composition.

Not any particular or living lord was the one of the parable of Luke 12: 36-38, although some such may have experienced some of the matters presented, and have manifested the characteristics recorded. The same applies with the servants or slaves of this illustrative lord. Only in the one matter of the absence of this lord and of the waiting attitude of his servants, is there the use of the present tense in the parable. The past tense has not any place in it, and the use of the present is limited to the first clause and matter of verse 36. "And ye yourselves like unto Men that wait for their lord." All later matters of the parable, including that of the remainder of verse 36, are associated with the future tense, and thus evidence their original character as creations of the Great Preacher, and as corresponding with the realities intended in their use. Thus, the one matter of the parable expressed in the present tense established a comparison with the times then present, and with living disciples. The absence of the past tense powerfully and truthfully intimated that no "waiting for the return" had taken place previously with any servants, since this "return" was not known previous to the speaking of this parable.

Living disciples were brought into the reality illustrated in the parable when Christ urged these to imitate or copy the Men of His illustration "And ye yourselves like unto Men that wait for their lord." There was not any delayed application with the first matter of the parable. Just as soon as living disciples could, and did, apprehend the matters of His departure, absence and return, they became the first waiting ones for their Lord and "like" the Men of His parable. As later disclosed both in Christ's parables and in human history, the Men waiting for their lord illustrated many generations of servants, commencing with the one ministered to by Christ. For the long time of His absence, and to the Era ending in the promised return, the desired, proper and illustrated attitude for all Christ's followers was that of Luke 12: 36, "And ye yourselves like unto Men that wait for their lord." But with this first matter, and the use of the present tense, there is in the same verse the introduction of features in the future tense "When he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh." In verses 37, 38, and in the same connection of the future return of the lord of the parable, "when and shall" are the terms used. With the servants and in this future connection there is not only this feature of time stressed, but an important difference presented in their course to that of their lord's. The imperative is associated with his course; "will return, shall come." But of that course of the servants at this future time it is said: "That when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately; whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching." Waiting, watching and ready are all enjoined by the lord on his servants, but it is left for events to prove at his return if his commands and wishes will be realised. "And if he shall find them so, blessed are those servants."

Thus, from the commencement of the parable and its waiting servants, there is the emphasising of the certainty of the lord's return. It is only in the associations of the return that the course of the servants is not defined in the same terms as those used of his. Their obedient choice and action are necessary to the realisation of the desired attitude of ready. How accurate and beautiful are these matters of the parable! Christ's return to His people is as certain as that of the lord of His parable. But only those giving heed to His Gospel, cherishing the One Hope of His return and loving His appearing, will be found and addressed by Him as blessed when He appears. This parable in its future features or phases could not present the certain course pursued by the servants, although it does forecast that of the lord's. This characteristic of the parable is in agreement with the class to which it belongs, and will be more manifest from later tracings.

In Luke 12: 36, and in opening the parable Christ defines the persons of the illustration as Men, not women, nor comprising both sexes, men and women. "Like unto Men that wait for their lord." The listening disciples to whom the parable was spoken and all later ones of the Age were and are composed of men and women of equal standing in His grace and service. And all these were exhorted by Him to be like the Men of the parable. There are many Scrip-

tures where the term Men or Man is used without regard to sexes, and as indicating human beings as distinct from other kingdoms or creatures of God. Gen. 1: 27, Rom. 5: 12, Rev. 21: 3, illustrate a numerous class of this kind of reference. But in other Scriptures, and where there is necessity for distinguishing men and women, the differences are made. Christ's parables are marked presentations of this latter kind, they are as exact and accurate in this feature as they are in all others. Christ's references to Men had application to males, and when females were intended, woman, or women, was employed. When He intended both sexes there was the use of a distinctive designation.

The same illustrative persons referred to as Men in Luke 12: 36 are later in verses 37, 38 designated servants or slaves. If Christ had not intended to indicate Males only and not any females, He would have employed the term servants in verse 36 instead of Men, as He does in verses 37, 38. But there is first the defining of the persons intended as Men, and afterwards the definition of their standing or relationship to the lord they are waiting for, servants, slaves. Men servants comprised the household of the lord of this parable, unlike that of Luke 12: 42, 48, where "menservants and maidservants," are specified in verse 45 as constituting that household. This difference between the households in these connected parables serves to manifest the wisdom and attention to details bound up in these illustrations, and the need with every anxious reader for close attention and careful study to understand aright. Any confusion of mind resulting from the diverse uses of illustrative persons in the parables of Christ can be effectively removed by the aid of the keys provided with each parable and which are available to earnest and humble seekers.

The particular services, duties, standing of the different persons of the diverse parables are responsible for the various designations, together with the fact of every parable being in a class of its own of the two kinds previously defined. Where the particular services or duties of females form the matters of illustration as in Matt 13: 33, Luke 15: 8, 9, Women are specified as doing the things recorded. But such services as are mentioned in Matt. 13: 24, 26, 44 of building a house, sowing seed in a field, finding a hidden treasure by digging for it, are masculine employments and in each a Man is specified as doing the things recorded. Where the position or duties outlined can be filled or performed by either sex or by both as in Matt. 13: 48, no sex distinctions are mentioned or involved. In Matt. 13: 38, and where both sexes are intended in the different kinds of Children, there is also the making manifest of the different origin and standing of each class. "The good seed are the children of the Kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked." This latter is included in a parable which like that of Matt. 25: 1, 13 is an exact likeness of the Kingdom. The term Virgins in the one parable like that of Children in the other includes both sexes as well as other features of likeness. But the need for, as also the particular significance of Virgins in the one parable, are matters which will be considered in their proper places.

later. Just as Virgins could not be used in the parable of Matt. 13: 24, 30, 36, 42, so Children would not be appropriate or expressive enough in the parable of Matt. 25: 1, 13, although both terms are used of the one class in exact parables of the Kingdom, and as including and defining male and female.

The specifying of Men servants in Luke 12: 36 does not make any reference to their general employments in their lord's house or estate, but only treats on the matters of waiting for their lord during his absence, and later of watching for his arrival. This parable does not design any exposition of the services or work of the servants but only of their attitude to their absent lord and his return. Waiting and watching illustrate more of patient endurance than physical strength, such as obtains with most illustrations of masculine services. This "waiting" which eventuates in "watching" during the night of the lord's arrival home was not suitable for women, but only for men. Moreover, in its masculine expression it served to display obedience and patient devotion more uncommon in the natural composition of men than in that of women. To obey and to manifest loving devotion to a lord when he is absent are traits more difficult of cultivation and display with the masculine than with the feminine. "And ye yourselves like unto Men that wait for their lord" is made more powerful in its masculine setting.

There was further necessity for the definition of the standing of the "Men" thus waiting. These Men were not relatives, friends or neighbours of the absent lord, but they were his servants or slaves, his property by legal right, and not hired labourers. As twice declared in the parable, both of the lord and of the servants, the relationship between them made him their or the lord, with every legal right to command and not to solicit their obedience. In this, as in all other parables, there is in the designations of the different persons a true reflex of their standing and relationship to each other. "Servants" corresponds with the title of "lord," and the addition of their or the to "lord" completes the intended correspondence. If the Men of the parable were merely employees or hired labourers they would not have been presented in the attitudes of waiting and watching for their lord, but for a "householder," as in the parable of Matt. 20: 1-15. In this latter parable, as in that of Luke 12: 36-38, there is agreement in the different names of the illustrative persons in each. Working for wages involves both choice and liberty; of being hired or engaged by an employer, with the right of the labourer for such conditions, hours and wages as were regarded satisfactory. "For the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a Man that is a householder which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day he sent them into his vineyard."

The fundamental differences between these parables of servants and labourers include the respective designations of lord and householder, with the two particular persons in the distinct positions of authority. It is manifestly wrong to regard the term "servants" used frequently in the New Testament as outlining the standing of voluntary service, since this latter is indicated in the term

"labourers" But, and as first enunciated and illustrated by Christ, both servants and labourers are definitions of relationships of the true people of God, every true believer is both a servant and a labourer. The primary significance of servant or slave is that of a purchased one—the property of the Purchaser. This matter serves to bring prominent a relationship of the Almighty quite distinct from that of Creator and Moral Governor, together with the making manifest of the Son of God as the active means of all Redemption. By being the Author of Redemption and Father of the Redeemer and Saviour, Jehovah is rightly spoken of frequently in the Prophets as also Redeemer and Saviour. Both these titles, with others of like import, are employed in the New Testament exclusively to the Son of God, the active Means of all Redemption. The Father and Son are inseparably associated in this gracious and universal work in their respective "Words" of the Old and New Testaments. Redeemer and Saviour apply to both, and are readily distinguished in each reference with the two Persons, the Author and Means.

The Son of God sent by the Father purchased from sin and death all the rational subjects of these "enemies," by suffering in death "the just for the unjust", by bearing in His body on the cross the sin of the world. In such Scriptures as 1st Peter 1: 18, 19, Rom. 14.9, the dual aspects of the Redeemer in this purchasing work are presented; that of the price paid by Him, and that of the rights obtained by Him in this purchase. "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living." The different lords of His parables are all tiny illustrations of Himself, and the different households of slaves of these lords illustrate the purchased ones of Christ. But only such redeemed ones—sinners purchased by Christ, accepting by faith the free gift of reconciliation with God through His Son, become during the present Age both confessed and acknowledged servants of the Lord that bought and owns them. "And ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price," is a key to all the references to slaves in Christ's parables, illustrated by the social conditions of human society in the first century. It is only after accepting the standing of servant that the one of labourer in the work of the Lord can be entered into. And, as intimated in several parables, it is the appointment of the Lord which gives to every man his work. (Mark 13:34.) For the whole of life succeeding the acceptance of God's gracious gift to faith, the standing of servant allies to Christ, and makes acceptable labouring in His work the great delight of life.

The parable of Luke 12: 36-38 does not illustrate labouring, but the attitude of servants only. The great importance of the first followers of Christ—those listening to His parables, having their lights burning and entering into the "waiting" state illustrated in the men of the parable, brings prominent a subject of supreme importance and vast dimensions. The establishment on Earth and amongst believing human beings by the Lord Himself, of the One Great Hope, is comprised in this subject God reserved for the ministry of His Son the establishing of this great Hope, and appointed

the Gospel Age succeeding that ministry for the bringing of a community of believers in it, to the highest celestial glory provided in His universal purpose. It was not possible for human faith and understanding to be centred on the return from Heaven of the Redeemer of Men, until after the redeeming work of His first appearing had been fully accomplished, and the public Ascension to Heaven in the sight of watching disciples realised.

This "Ascension" to Heaven in the sight of the hundred and twenty witnesses completed the establishment of the One Hope in the faith of the first of the waiting servants. It presented to the whole Age a manifestation of what Christ meant in His parables by the departure and absence of the illustrative lords of these. Moreover, it gave to the living disciples a full meaning to the many references such as that of Luke 12. 33: "Provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the Heavens that faileth not. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Not until He passed into the Heavens and from their midst, could they have this treasure there. Additional to the wonderful fact of His public Ascension to Heaven, and connecting this departure with the promised and certain return, two Messengers were sent from the Heaven He had gone to with the message of Acts 1: 11: "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into Heaven." With this departure of the real Lord from His servants, all these latter entered on the "waiting" state illustrated in the parable. Like the Men of the illustration, all these servants knew where their Lord had gone.

And these learnt, as they were able to enter into the deep things of their Lord's parables, and by these latter to understand the profound prophecies of the Father's Word, the Universal significance of their Lord's return. This return was not only the One great Hope of all believing in the absent One, but that of the Divine purpose in the created Universe. No human lord's absence and return to his own household could fill out this universal feature, but this same feature was brought to understanding by many other beautiful parables. "Indeed, the earnest expectation of the creation longs for the manifestation of the Sons of God," was the later elaboration of this feature in Rom. 8: 19, as that of Haggai 2: 7 was its forecast in times preceding the first appearing. "And the desire of all Nations shall come." Life's hard experiences, with all mankind and unrealised hopes and aspirations, have created in every heart a longing for that which the Infinite One will abundantly satisfy in the One Whose return is the ignorant desire of all Nations. But there is a very great difference between this unenlightened "longing" of all sinners as the result of life's hard lessons, and that of an enlightened and enthusiastic yearning for a known and dearly-loved Master's return. "Waiting," with all these latter daily, brought the longing desire, "Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

No Lord, Teacher and Guide ever lived with and taught the believing people of previous dispensations, or ascended to Heaven in their sight with a promised return to them. This One great Hope was unknown until first revealed in the parable under considera-

tion. In Matt. 13: 17, and in the stressing by Christ of the great privileges brought to Israel by the wonderful things of His first appearing and ministry, there is mention of the longing desires of those of previous times. "Many Prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." All these in looking for the first appearing of the Lord Messiah wondered how the Divine purpose would be fully accomplished by Him, in its distinct phases of suffering and humiliation and of Glory and universal power. The departure to Heaven, long absence and return were keys that were first presented in the parables of the Great Preacher.

This new Hope of waiting for the Lord first established by Christ is the central theme of all the Epistles and of the Apocalypse: "Surely I come quickly" is the final message of the Apocalypse and of Inspiration. In Ephes. 1: 18 the Apostle expresses the desire for Gentile believers to fully understand all that is bound up in this Hope of His calling, which in Ephes. 4: 4 is rightly designated the "One Hope." In Titus 2:13 it is properly referred to as a "glorious Hope," and in 1st Peter 1:3 as a lively or living Hope, because it is connected with a living Person Who—like His believing people on Earth, is waiting in Heaven for the times appointed by the Father for His return.

The parable in Luke 12: 36-38, and in its similitude with Christ's people of the Gospel Age, ignores death with the waiting servants. The illustrative persons are the same individuals at the lord's departure, for the time of his absence, and at the era of his return. But in the reality intended in this first feature of the parable, all the generations from the first century of the Christian Era to those on Earth from the opening of the nineteenth, are the ones addressed by Christ in the words, "And ye yourselves like unto Men that wait for their lord." During this long time and as clearly indicated in Prophecy there was no warrant for expecting the real Lord's return, and as history discloses not any of His true people, much less others, were watching for His coming, on any dates or times arising out of His word or their own longings. All the faithful of these many centuries passed their lives "waiting for their Lord," but not in any way in watching for His anticipated coming. Not any movement of going forth to meet Him is recorded during this long time of His absence. But all these waiting ones had a Hope which death was powerless to affect. Ignorance of what death is and of what succeeds it is responsible for the prevailing state with mankind referred to in Heb. 2:15. "And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." All these are the human creation to be delivered during the Kingdom of Christ as declared in Rom. 8: 21: "From the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." But "waiting for their Lord" delivered in the present life both from fear of death and its associated bondage all believers in its Hope. "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not as others which have no Hope." (1st Thess. 4:13.) Unlike the false hope of human immortality, which seeks to deceive by making

death unreal, the One true Hope of Christ's return makes death powerless to interfere with its own realisation even in recognising the reality of death.

It is an old and true saying that "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick." (Prov. 13:12.) When the first followers of Christ learnt of the long time of their Lord's absence and to His return, only real faith in this latter could make them like men that wait for their Lord. And when, as history presents as true, many in the Christian Church grew tired of "waiting" and were deceived by the false theory of the survival of the soul at death, the loss of the One Hope inevitably resulted in the decay of spirituality and loss of associated truths. (2nd Tim. 2: 16-18.) It was and is impossible to put aside this Hope and to hold any other truth of the Divine purpose correctly. But to all retaining it and patiently waiting there was presented another matter which shortened the otherwise long time to the Lord's return. To living faith, in the first as in the twentieth century and all intervening ones Christ's return is ever at hand or impending. It was to this sight of real faith that Scriptures, such as James 5.7, were presented in the first century. "Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. For the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." Also 1st Peter 4.7. "But the end of all things is at hand." And again, in Rom. 14:12, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." The One Hope to all believing it with the heart, makes the times to its realisation to be exactly the same to all the waiting and watching ones of the whole Age.

So far as personal knowledge of the lapse of time is concerned, that of the individual's life is the utmost known by each. With each generation of believers Christ's absence has been that of their own lifetime, and waiting with all of these is, in its extremest length, after believing the One Hope down to death—or a few years at most. And to the resurrected dead in Christ at His return, there will not be any recognised break or lapse of time between their death and resurrection at his appearing, although actually many years or centuries may have elapsed between the two events. It is wonderfully true that things are to us what we believe them to be, hence the imperative need for a correct faith such as that provided in Inspiration. The end of life brought by death to believers in the first as in all succeeding centuries means to these, the return of Christ and their own resurrection. Thus to real faith the coming of the Lord is always nigh, ever at hand, never far distant. The uncertainty of life, not knowing what a day may bring forth, presents a further limit to "waiting for their Lord" with all His servants. There is and always has been since Christ's departure a beautiful and accurate truth in the words, "the Lord might come to-day." Hence, in this view, which is a true one, "waiting" is only for to-day. The short period between the rising and setting of the Sun, is truly all that ever belongs to mortals living on the Earth to use wisely in waiting for the Lord, or unwisely in being engrossed in mere earthly things and ideals.

One of such brief periods of time has with every one of the dead in Christ brought the end of conscious waiting, and another of

the same days will assuredly witness His return for all that have waited for Him. Since to-day may be the end of life (as every day of each year is to some of the living), then to-day is the time to be waiting if at all, and this has obtained with every day since that of Christ's Ascension and with all His servants. "How ye turned from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from Heaven," was Paul's witness to the instructed Hope of the early Christians amongst the Gentiles, in 1st Thess. 1'9-10

The parable in Luke 12' 36-38 is one of the second kind or class of parables, which "kinds" we have previously defined. In some of its features it is a true likeness with the Kingdom; in others it differs considerably with Kingdom features. With this parable there is not any prefix of "like unto the Kingdom of Heaven," and the absence of this is responsible for several features of difference with exact Kingdom parables. By failing to note this important matter false theories are often presented as based on these features by those who have not correctly understood the Divine Purpose and its realisation.

Christ's appeal, in the first clause of verse 36, for all His people to imitate or to be like the illustrative Men of His parable, varies with the order observed in all exact Kingdom parables. In these latter, for example Matt. 25:1, the Kingdom features are exactly like the illustrative ones. "Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten Virgins." Not that those in the Kingdom are urged to imitate or to be like ten virgins, but that at the time specified the illustrative ten Virgins are a true likeness with the Kingdom. Exactly the same obtains with all parables of this class; like the Kingdom of Heaven. But the parable commencing with Luke 12:36 does not say that the Kingdom is like unto Men that wait for their lord. Rather it presents these illustrative men in this matter as worthy of imitation by all the servants of the Kingdom. A copy for imitation is very different to two duplicates of the one matter. All narratives in parables likened unto the Kingdom are duplicates in their features with the ones of the Kingdom, hence are exact prophetic forecasts not conditional nor dependent on other persons or things for their accomplishment. But only those heeding Christ's command became like the Men of His parable, "that wait for their lord," during the long times of His absence and to the Era of His impending return. The exact parables display these waiting ones during this long period.

There is not any difficulty in recognising the features like the Kingdom and those unlike it in the parable of Luke 12: 36-38. And these latter are necessary for the form of the narrative comprising the parable, and to more fully display the features like the Kingdom. Such an illustrative narrative as this, in presenting an exact likeness in some features with the Kingdom, compelled the use of the diverse matters to harmonise the human elements in its composition. The return home and to his slaves of any lord after a mere ordinary absence, of business or pleasure, would not provide a suitable illustration or "likeness" with Christ's return from Heaven, since there is not anything ordinary in the cause or fact of His absence much

less in His glorious appearing. Thus an exceptional absence and return are both imperatively required in this narrative and with the illustrative lord, even to faintly show forth the altogether exceptional absence and return of the Lord of glory. In the estimate of this glorious Lord and Great Preacher the comparison of His parable presents the very best and most suitable illustration of an exceptional absence and return that human experience can provide. And here it is as an imperishable evidence of Inspiration and the expression of the touch of the Master hand.

An Eastern lord, the owner of an estate worked by men slaves, on leaving home for the exceptional purpose of his own wedding, informs his slaves of the cause of his departure and absence and the particular night of his return. He enjoins that they all wait for him during his absence, watch for his arrival home, which will be notified by his knock, and be ready to give such a welcome as the auspicious and exceptional occasion calls for. This lord, when telling his slaves of the exact night of his return, does not inform them of the exact hour that he will arrive and knock. It would indeed be offensive to this lord if on arrival home he found his house in darkness, unilluminated, and all his servants asleep. But such a joyous event and season as the one of his own wedding will cause the lord to be delighted if on his arrival home he finds lights burning and all his servants watching for and ready to welcome him. Any such lord as the one of this parable, and living in the first century, would expect obedience to all his commands from his slaves on peril of severe punishment. And when obeyed under ordinary circumstances he would not feel nor evidence any delight at the obedience shown to his reasonable commands. This latter finds expression in the parable of Luke 17: 7-9: "Does he think that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not."

But the Master's touch is disclosed in the display of the lord's delight with his slaves found watching and ready at his return, in the exceptional matter of his own "Wedding." Any other cause of absence and return would not have called forth the delighted display from the lord recorded in the parable. This exceptional delight is not only shown in words of commendation by the lord but in an altogether exceptional act of condescension with such a lord, as in Luke 12:37: "That he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth to serve them." Any critical reading of the history of social conditions in the Roman Empire of the first century will bring appreciation of Christ's estimate of exceptional condescension, as illustrated in this action of the lord of the parable. And all humble students of Inspiration and enlightened on the Divine Purpose will reverently admire the surpassing wisdom shown by Christ, in associating the lord's previous wedding with the formation and display of the delighted serving by him of his own slaves with meat. While it is amazingly true that the delight of the lord of the parable with his slaves is a true similitude of the greater Lord's delight with His watching servants, the form of expression is as varied as that of the standing of the

lord of the parable, and of the Lord of glory. "Girding himself and serving his own slaves with meat" was indeed remarkable evidence of condescension with sinful lords, called forth by exceptional circumstances and delight. It was the very best obtainable as an illustration of self-abnegation in service to others that were pleasing to the one thus ministering.

But it was in the days of His flesh and before His departure—not after His return, as it was with the lord of the parable, that Christ girded Himself, and was amongst men as "One that serveth." His "girding" commenced when, as in Philip 2: 7-8, 'He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.' And thus "girding" for the years of His earthly life was for the dual purpose of providing perfect righteousness for all the unrighteous sufficient for the Eternal life of all these, and atoning by a violent death for all the sins of all sinners. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." (1st Peter, 3 18). Concerning just one act of personal humility with the Lord of all, what words can be used in regard to the exquisite matter of John 13: 4-5? "He riseth from Supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into a basin, and began to wash His disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded." No such condescension or humility is presented in the course of the lord of the parable as that of washing the feet of his own slaves. The delight of this lord found its utmost expression, and his condescension its fullest display, in girding himself and serving them at meat or at a meal. These matters of the service of the lord of the parable, and of the Lord of all in washing the feet of His disciples, bring to modern Western minds the different customs and ideals of Eastern peoples of nearly 20 centuries ago. The incomparable services of Christ throughout His earthly life, and in His sacrificial death, are the outstanding matters which never grow old or ordinary by repetition.

The exact likeness of the experience of Christ's watching servants at His return is presented in the parable of the Virgins in Matt. 25: 1-13. This illustrative matter, unlike that of Luke 12: 36-38, is not limited in manifestation by human nature, and has not any features unlike the Kingdom. "And they that were ready went in with Him to the Marriage, and the door was shut." Another and later view in this connection, and with all sharing in this wonderful Marriage, is recorded in Rev. 7. 16-17, and in this there is displayed the greater Lord's provision for His servants, in contrast with that of "serving at meat" of his slaves by the illustrative lord. "They shall hunger no more; neither thirst any more; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the Throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters."

Thus, the wedding of the illustrative lord is, on account of the exceptional matters considered, presented in Luke 12: 36 as transpiring during his absence from his home and slaves. But the King-

dom truth of the Marriage of the greater Lord is that it transpires after His return. Beyond the involved fact of a Bride, and this in the incidental reference to "the wedding" from which the illustrative lord is presented as returning, there is not any mention in the parable. This narrative does not require any reference to the Bride of the lord, nor any particulars of the wedding. "When he will return from the wedding" is all that is said or required in this connection. The reference to this as "the wedding" leaves no cause for doubt as to whose it is. With every man "the wedding" is his own, any other is "a wedding." Although the Marriage of the greater Lord, "the marriage of the Lamb," as in Rev. 19:7, is also—like that of the lord of the parable—not manifest to human sight. His Bride is prominent in all references to it. The whole of the parable of Matt. 22. 1-14 is devoted to the exposition of the gathering and preparing of this multitudinous Bride, during the long times of the absence of the Lord Who returns as the Bridegroom, when the time for the Marriage has come. As clearly outlined in this latter parable, the Bride of the Lamb—the greater Lord, comprises His servants of all generations of the Age of His absence, and all these are united to Him at His return to the Marriage. In Matt. 25: 10 the last and living constituents of this Bride are made manifest in the "wise Virgins meeting the Bridegroom when He comes." "And they that were ready went in with Him to the Marriage."

When there is recognition of the necessity for and uses of the features not like the Kingdom in the parable of Luke 12: 36-38, together with those which are exact similitudes, the enlightened mind is filled with wonder and praise at the wisdom displayed in both. The feature of servants waiting for their lord's promised and certain return is a true likeness. The associating of a wedding with the lord of the illustration is also like the Kingdom, but unlike it in the times of its occurrence and the associated matter of displaying the Bride. The place of departure and return of the lord of the parable is that of his own house where his slaves are, and is not any likeness with the greater Lord's departure from and return to this earthly scene. When Christ departed from the Earth and His watching servants He was not leaving His Home but was rather going home. The Earth was not His home, and was only the temporary abode of the "house" of His servants. Any true faith in the Son of God must include belief in His tabernacled in the flesh and on Earth, and that He was a Heavenly Personality. He was neither of the world of mankind nor of the Earth in origin, but He was from above. His coming from above or from Heaven, and not from beneath or from the Earth, was first declared by John Baptist as recorded in John 3: 31, 32, and later by Christ Himself in such references as John 8: 23: "Ye are from beneath; I am from above; ye are of this world; I am not of this world." What Christ meant by "beneath" was the material Earth, and by "this world"—the sinful order of human society, such definitions being in agreement with all Scriptural testimony.

Moreover, when Christ said "I am from above," He was referring to Personality and not bodily form. The same applies with the

reference to others, "Ye are from beneath" (as also to the bodily forms of all these) Christ's disciples, like all other human beings, were from beneath, although by believing in Him they were not "of the world." Christ's bodily form was not from above, neither was it from beneath, but it was a direct creation of God. The first man, Adam, was, in personality and in bodily substance, from beneath or of the Earth. The Son of God, the "last Adam," was in Personality "the Lord from Heaven" with a human body of flesh (1st Cor 15: 47.) The designating of Christ, in 1st Cor 15: 45, 47, as the "last Adam and the Second Man," includes amongst several important features that of Christ's human body being a direct creation of God like that of the first man Adam. As separating Christ from any connection with the first man Adam in bodily form, as well as in Personality, Paul wrote of Him as a "last Adam, Second Man, and the Lord from Heaven." Christ's human body was God's direct creation; a mother being used by Omnipotence as the source of bodily substance instead of the Earth, as in the creation of the first man.

Christ's definition of His own Personality given at the Last Supper filled the Apostles with delight and explained many previous difficulties relating to His unique Person and character. "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again I leave the world, and go to the Father." The coming and going were of the one "Personality." All others in human flesh comprise the world that God so loved as to send His Son for its deliverance. In 1st Tim. 1: 15 there is the presentation of the faithful saying, "worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." The full accomplishment of the Divine purpose in this coming is the delightful theme of many Scriptures. "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." In this Son and through the experiences of His earthly life ending in death, God fully accomplished the salvation of the world, and set apart the two Ages of Christ's Kingdom on Earth for the imparting to all sinners of the "salvation" provided.

A Heavenly Personality in a human body "prepared" by the Father, as in Heb 10:5, dwelt among us for the appointed days of His flesh, a Stranger from Home and absent from His Father's bodily Presence. Never did any son have such love for his father or look forward with longing desire to going home to his father, when absent for a long time, as the Son of God when tabernacling on the Earth and amongst the world of mankind. "I go to the Father," was His delighted and repeated exclamation at the Last Supper; Home, with the Father, was His longing desire when He had finished the glorious purpose of His earthly Life. Where Christ is makes Home to all His believing people, just the same as where the Father is Home to the Son of God. "While we are at home in the body we are absent from Home, from the Lord." Christ's departure Home made the Earth a "strange country" to all His waiting people, without any continuing city. This was the designed as it was the inevitable result of Christ's departure and absence, and could not be illustrated in any parable of another lord's departure and absence from his servants. All human comparisons utterly fail

to present any likeness with this feature. The "treasure in Heaven" has not only made "waiting for Him" the attractive Hope of life to all His servants of the long time of His absence, but made His Home theirs also and ardently desired.

Christ's own words spoken at the last Supper and recorded in John 14: 2, 3, were the best commentary on His parables on the departing and absent lord. They were the first cause of the intense longing in His servants both for His return and for living with Him in His Heavenly Home for Eternity when His Kingdom on Earth has fully realised its beneficent and universal purposes. "In My Father's House are many mansions (abodes); if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am there ye may be also." It was impossible to illustrate this wonderful matter in any parable of servants "waiting" for the return of an earthly lord. The "Father's House" where Christ went to from the Earth and His servants was Christ's Home from times Eternal. It was there where in the first of all "Beginnings" and before any created works or other beings were formed, that the Son of God—"the Firstborn of every creature" entered life. It was there where He was trained by His Father and brought into the exact moral and spiritual likeness of the same wonderful Father. In such Scriptures as Coloss. 1: 5, 17, John 1: 1, 2, there is the presentation of this profound and beautiful matter, and the later sending of the Son into the world to perfectly reveal the Father's character, and to accomplish the Father's will, bears abundant witness to the previous training of the Son by the Father. Christ's departure Home for the whole of the Gospel Age had also the designed and revealed purpose of making ready a particular place in the great Heavenly House of the Father, for all His servants of the present Age. As clearly revealed in the Apocalypse this "place" is a new City called "New Jerusalem." This City, like its privileged and blessed inhabitants, is referred to as a "Bride" for the second Age of Christ's Kingdom, and is brought to the Earth as a Tabernacle of God and the centre of worship and administration during this final Age of the Kingdom. (Rev. 3:12; Rev. 21:2, 10, 23-27.) It is at Christ's appearing and for the whole of the first Age of His Kingdom—the Millennial Age, that "Bride" has its personal application to all His glorified people. And the Millennial dispensation is that of the "Marriage Supper of the Lamb." (Rev. 19:7-9.) "And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding," becomes luminous when the reality intended in it is understood.

IV.

"THE SERVANTS WATCHING FOR THEIR LORD."

In the parable of Luke 12.36-38 and of necessity with an illustration of a greater reality than itself, the same servants "waiting" for their lord during his absence from home are the watching ones at his return. Moreover, the involved time of absence of this lord is only that of the duration of wedding festivities in the East, or for a few days at most. But, every true servant of the Gospel Age is included in the distinct matters of the "waiting and watching servants" of the parable, and the many centuries of Christ's absence in Heaven are illustrated in the few days of the illustrative lord's absence. Since Christ only formed and spake the parable for the purpose of illustrating His own course and that desired from His people, then He intended these greater features to be recognised as the outstanding matters. The very great difference between "waiting and watching" can only be faintly shown in the narrative of the parable, but the consummate skill of the Great Preacher has made this difference so marked as to faithfully correspond with the two divisions of the Gospel Age. In the totally different view and matter presented in the parable of the "Wheat and Tares," in Matt. 13:24-30, the same Gospel Age is divided into the three parts of Sowing, Growing and Reaping. But in the parable under consideration, treating on the two matters of the Lord's absence and return, there is the true correspondence in the two distinct attitudes of His servants and the two divisions of the Age.

As illustrated in the parable, "waiting for their lord" continues for the known time of his absence. There was not any need for nor possibility of these "Men" watching for their lord's return and arrival home, when they knew that he had not started on the return journey, but only for the continuance of waiting. But when the known night of his return came the waiting state was at once succeeded by the watching one. Just as the few days' absence of the lord was the period of waiting with his servants, so the lesser period of the hours of one night comprised the time of watching. These features of contrasts in the two periods and their length, together with the lord's return being at night, are a true likeness with Kingdom truths. The time of waiting for the return of Christ is far longer in years than that of the watching Era, and all true servants living during that long period knew that their Lord's return was distant from their own times. Thus all the waiting ones are the "dead in Christ" when the watching time arrives. Only living believers can consciously wait or watch for their Lord. The "waiting" through life of all those who become the dead in Christ still leaves all these both waiting and ready but not watching when the Lord comes.

This important feature of truth illustrated in the parable serves to reveal that all mention of "watching" in the New Testament and in the connection of Christ's return has application only to believers living during the Era preceding and ending at Christ's

return. This latter is parallel with the night of the Lord's return in the parable of Luke 12 36-38, and is a period of time comprising an unrevealed number of years, ending in the day of Christ's descent from Heaven. In later considerations in this work reasons are presented for the belief, that the **watching Era** commenced over one hundred years ago, and that the "Waiting" times ended at that clearly defined Era. Thus any watching during the waiting period was not for the Lord's return—in agreement with the illustrative matter of the parable, but had such connections as that of Luke 21:34. "And take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." (1st Cor. 16: 13.) In another connection of the work of the Lord, which also applies to the watching period as well as to the longer one of waiting, Ministering servants are referred to as manifesting a particular kind of watching, as in Heb. 13:17: "Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves; for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account" Thus there were not any "Watchmen" amongst the servants of Christ during the times of Waiting and in the connection of the Lord's return. Every exhortation to "Watch," in this regard and in Christ's parables, as in the Epistles and Apocalypse, has direct appeal and application to living servants during the second period of the Watching times.

Of necessity and as previously noted, the parable of Luke 12: 36-38 ignores death in its intended realities of distinguishing the distinct times and servants waiting and watching. This is responsible for a blessed or a happy state being associated in it with the watching servants and not with the waiting ones. It is to the watching servants and not to the waiting ones that the lord of the parable returns. "Blessed are those servants whom the lord, when he cometh, shall find **watching**." If indeed the matter of Luke 12: 36-38 was not a parable or illustration of other and greater things, it would not, and could not, distinguish between waiting and watching in the regard just noted. It would rather include waiting with watching as equal cause of a blessed state of the servants. To obediently wait during the lord's absence was as commendable as to be found watching at his return; the latter only completing the former.

But when the bigger matters intimated in the illustrative ones are recognised, the differences are not only very manifest, but are seen as very necessary. All the dead in Christ at His return are the "Waiting" ones. These cannot be **watching** or listening for his "knock." Those alive on that momentous day and **watching** are indeed blessed and happy beyond all those of all previous generations. These Watchers are the only ones of the whole Age to enter Immortal Life without death. Just as living servants are watching for the return of the lord of the parable, and listening for his knock announcing his arrival, so living Watchers hear the notification of the greater Lord, delightedly open to Him, and are "caught up to meet the Lord in the Air" when He returns. "Blessed are those servants whom the lord when he cometh shall find **watching**."

The times associated with the return of the lord to his watching servants, in the parable of Luke 12:38, are both interesting and of great significance. These times give added force to Christ's exhortation in verse 35: "Let your loins be girded about and your lights be burning." Lights are only required where darkness obtains, and not when the Sun is shining. This matter of the physical world has its duplicate in another world or order very prominent in the Scriptures, but not manifest elsewhere. The darkness prevailing in the world of human society throughout its history, on the matters of the Divine Being, Purpose, and service, finds frequent reference in the Inspired Word. In one comprehensive view presented and elaborated in this Word, one long night is comprised in the history of man from the entrance of sin with the first man to the Kingdom of Christ. At the commencement of this darkness brought by the disobedience of Adam, the "Lamp of Prophecy" was lit, and was provided as the only light in the night for a guide to those receiving it. "We have also a more sure Word of Prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the Day Star arise in your hearts" (2nd Peter, 1:19). The Divine Word is the only source of light in the darkness of the present life.

But it is of the Person of Christ the Son of God and His appearing in the dark world of human life, that "Day-dawn and Day Star" apply. The lamp of prophecy was given to light the course leading to Him, as in Acts 10:43: "To Him give all the Prophets witness." His first appearing in the world of mankind like that of His coming one was shown by the lamp, and was also that of a "Day-dawn from on high, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and the shadow of death." This visitation from on high was, as declared in Luke 1: 78, 79, "through the tender mercy of our God." The designations of Day Star, Sun of Righteousness, Light of the world, are not only applied to Christ, but to His appearances and work with the dark world of humanity. In two references and connections Christ referred to Himself as "The Light of the world" (John 8: 12; John 9:5), and in a third He distinguished the natural and physical world and its "Light"—the Sun, from the "world" of which He was The Light or Sun (John 11:9). The order of human life and society is the world of which Christ is The Light, like the Sun is of the world on which mankind live. "So long as I am in the world I am the Light of the world." In the Divine estimate this world was utterly dark and without hope, under the shadow and within the grip of death, and without possibility of life after death. But during the brief period of Christ's tabernacling in the world and on the Earth, He accomplished the vanquishing of the great cause of darkness and death, Sin, and established the One great Hope of Eternal Life in Eternal Light for all the dwellers in darkness and death.

When He first appeared, the world was without hope, but when He departed Home again, He not only left behind a glorious universal Hope, but, together with the Word of His testimony, other **personal** lights for the night of His absence. The Apostles were the first of these and are the ones referred to in Matt. 5: 14-16: "Ye are the light of the world." The Kingdom of Heaven comprising His cause

during the Age of His absence is that of Coloss. 1: 12, 13, "the inheritance of the saints in light," as its future and Eternal phase is that of Glory. Concerning all entering the present Kingdom of light, there is the "opening of their eyes, and turning them from darkness to light," with the providing of a standing where ever-increasing light is provided. And all these become lights, reflecting that which they receive.

Christ's exhortation in Luke 12: 35 for His followers to have their lights burning was directly associated by Him with waiting for their Lord. But in the illustrative matter of the parable a particular phase of "lights burning" is presented in the time of the lord's return. A real night and its watchers are the matters of illustration, as the time of the lord's return and for his servants to be watching with lights burning. In this feature no lights are needed and no watching is either necessary or done during the time of waiting. For this first and longest time the servants are waiting men with no watchers amongst them. But when the known night of the lord's return comes "lights burning" becomes necessary and all the waiting men become watchmen.

In each of the three verses comprising this parable Christ presents the return of the illustrative lord in as many different connections. In verse 36 it is associated with a knock notifying the lord's arrival. In verse 37 it is connected with the serving at meat of the servants by the delighted lord. And in verse 38 the time feature of the return is presented, and this as not only taking place at night but within certain specified watches of that night. "And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so (watching), blessed are those servants." At the time of Christ the period of darkness or night was divided into four watches, but Christ only mentions the middle two of these in this matter of the lord's return. The two others, first and fourth, are not overlooked by Him. The first watch marked the commencement of the night and of the lights being lit, and is involved without any need for mention in the reference to the associations of the second watch. "If the lord comes in the second watch and finds them watching," has the significance of an ending and not a beginning to watching. But the omission of any reference to the first watch suggests that the lord's return may not be in it, as also of the first association of a blessed state with watching in the second watch. The passing over the first watch in this parable finds a striking explanation in later tracings and with another parable of the return.

The reference to the third watch in Luke 12: 38 does not involve also the last or fourth watch, but rather suggests a full terminus to watching. "Or come in the third watch and find them so, blessed are those servants." If the fourth watch was included in the area of watching for the return, then that and not the third would have been the last mentioned. The secrecy of the hour of arrival as a test of obedient endurance is the outstanding matter of this phase of the parable, as it is in the greater reality illustrated in its use. The test would not be so thorough if the servants knew the exact hour of their lord's return. Moreover, the specified second and third

watches of the night fill in that portion of darkness most favourable to sleep, from nine in the evening to three in the morning. The remarkable "likeness" in this latter feature ought to be manifest to every student of Inspiration and our own times, in its Kingdom connections, and will be considered more fully in later tracings.

The incidental prominence in Scripture of "watch, watches" in application to divisions of the night, reflects the customs of mankind from ancient times, and varies in different parts of the Inspired Word as required by the varying customs with nations. The term "Watches" arose quite naturally in and from ancient times out of the employment of "Watchmen." With the services of these latter, of patrolling the streets of cities and announcing with loud voice or trumpet all causes for alarm or for continued confidence, there were the associated times of the night for these announcements and for changing or relieving Watchmen. Together with these general Watchmen of the cities there were those of buildings and enclosed areas designated Porters, and also frequently mentioned in the Scriptures. The distinguishing of Watchmen of cities and Porters of enclosed areas finds interesting mention in such references as 2nd Samuel 18: 24-26, "And the watchman called unto the porter."

Just as the Watches of the night and the two kinds of Watchmen have mention in natural and physical associations in the Scriptures, so the same terms and designations are employed in the moral and spiritual domain. For the portion of the "Night" from the call of Abraham to the appearing of Christ—"The Light of the world"—Israel was the privileged and isolated charge of the Divine teaching and guidance. This Nation and Kingdom of the Lord was not only ministered to by the Priesthood and services of the Tabernacle, but by a very numerous company of Prophets in every generation of the Age of the Law and Prophets. "I have sent unto you all My servants the Prophets, rising up early and sending them." (Jer. 35: 15.) All these Prophets were Watchmen, announcing with unwearied voice the conditions of the night and the causes for alarm or for security. "Also I set Watchmen over you, saying, Harken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said we will not hearken." (Jer. 6: 17.) In Ezek. 3: 17 the same designation and office finds mention with this Prophet's life's mission. "Son of man, I have made thee a Watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore hear the Word at My Mouth, and give them warning from Me." (Isai. 21: 6, 8, etc.) The very striking reference to different Watchmen and their unbroken succession and service in Isaiah 62: 6, 7, serves to give added significance to the "wailing wall" at Jerusalem, and its uninterrupted scenes of grief, and appeal to Heaven for the restoration of the glory of Jerusalem. "I have set Watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night; ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence. And give Him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the Earth."

But all the human Watchmen—the Prophets—of Israel were but the lesser to the Greater sending them to His House of Israel. And this greatest of all Watchmen was also the only Porter of the door

or gate. He alone could admit into His secret Tabernacle those desirous of entering, and guard all within from enemies and danger, as in Psalm 91: 1, 2, 4. Many Watchmen have been in the service of the Great One during the long night, but He alone combines the offices of Watchman and Porter in His unwearied and beneficent services. The great Watchman and Porter of Israel through all her chequered history, and for all the watches of the night, was Jehovah Himself, the God of Israel. He was the Watchman of the streets and cities and Porter at the doors and gates, that never slumbered or needed relieving. "Behold He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper" (Psalm 121: 4, 5). And in all Israel's experiences amongst the Gentiles since her banishment from His land and favour, the same Watchman's all-seeing eye has been on them and His strong hand too. And soon, as Porter, He will open a door for them of escape from Gentile dominion, and of admission into His and their land and His favour and smile. "And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith the Lord" (Jeremiah 31: 28).

When Christ came into the world as the "Good Shepherd" (as well as in His several other relationships), and at manhood established and entered the new fold provided for the sheep of the Gospel Age, the One Great Porter opened the door for Him to enter, as in John 10: 2, 3. "He that entereth in by the door is the Shepherd of the sheep. To Him the Porter openeth." And not only to the good Shepherd, but also to all the sheep entering the fold with Him during the Gospel Age, the Father is the Porter at the door admitting them. All these "coming unto God by Him" are admitted into His family of Sons. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Galat. 3: 26). In Acts 14: 27 and concerning the believing Gentiles in many countries of the Roman Empire, gathered to Christ by the ministry of Paul, there is further display of the Great Porter at the door of the Kingdom. "They rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles."

In the beautiful little parable of Mark 13: 34, Christ presents the Father as both Watchman and Porter over the House of Christ on Earth, for the particular night when Christ is absent in Heaven. "For the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and directed the Porter to watch." As we have noted in the parable of Luke 12: 36-38, not any of the servants are watchmen during the long time of Waiting, and this is in agreement with the parable of Mark 13: 34, and where only the Porter is watching. But the further stage of Mark 13: 35-37 is also in agreement with that of the night of the lord's arrival when all the previous waiting men become watchmen. "Watch ye therefore (like the Porter had done previously, and was still doing); for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at cock-crowing, or in the morning." It is manifest that this reference to watching for the return of Christ, together with all others of the same kind, are

addressed to those living on Earth during the Era, which is parallel to the night of the Lord's return, in the parable of Luke 12: 36-38. All Christ's and Apostolic exhortations to Watch, in the connection of Christ's return, have this application to those living on Earth during the watching Era. The other class of appeal which does not mention "watching," but of being "Ready," has application to the Waiting as to the Watching servants. Matt. 24:44 applies to all servants, that of verse 42 has application to all that can become watchers if they will during the Era of His return. Only those alive on Earth preceding, and at the return of Christ, can Watch and Pray, as enjoined in Luke 21. 35, 36 "For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole Earth Watch ye, therefore, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass and to stand before the Son of Man" Not any during the Waiting times could thus Watch and Pray, but all of these latter are included in another appeal to Watch and Pray, in Mark 13:33, and apart from Second Advent times

The ancient Egyptians—if not other contemporary nations also, divided the night or twelve hours from sunset to sunrise, and from six in the evening to six in the morning, into three watches of four hours each. In incidental references the Scriptures confirm secular history in this connection. The Hebrew people, by their previous association with the Egyptians, adopted these night measures during their national history before Christ. The "beginning, middle and morning" watches were the designations of these three divisions. The first of these finds mention in Lam. Jer. 2. 19. "Arise, cry out in the night; in the beginning of the watches pour out thine heart." The second or "middle watch" has reference in Judges 7: 19, and in association with the times and experiences of Gideon. "So Gideon and the hundred men that were with him came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch." The third or morning watch, from two to six, is first referred to in Exod 14: 24, and in the connection of Israel's deliverance through the Red Sea. In this matter no human watchers are mentioned, but only the One Great Watcher of His people. "And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians" In 1st Sam. 11: 11 there is another mention of the morning watch.

At the time of Christ the people of Israel in Palestine observed the Roman and Greek methods of dividing night and day. From sunset or six in the evening to sunrise or six in the morning the night was divided into four watches of three hours duration each. The New Testament references to night watches are in agreement with the customs of the chief nations living at the times of the first Advent, as those in the Old Testament are of the customs of more ancient nations previous to Christ. This incidental mention of Watches, with the many references to ordinary Watchmen and Porters and their services, together with the historical differences of customs with nations in the two Testaments of Father and Son, are some of many outside evidences of Inspiration appealing to the

careful and humble student and confirming his faith. From six to nine after sunset was the evening watch, or "Even," as in Matt. 8: 16 and in Mark 1.32, where the setting of the Sun is associated. A third reference in Luke 4: 40 is also in agreement with the two others quoted in presenting this "Even when the Sun was set" as a particular time for Christ's healing the sick of all manners of diseases. The heat of the day would be most trying for the removal of these from their homes to the Great Healer, and His surpassing sympathy and tender solicitude arranged the "Even" for His works of love.

The second watch, from nine to twelve (midnight), was called the midnight watch. The third, from the midnight hour to three in the morning, was designated "cock crow"; and the fourth, from three in the morning to six, was the morning watch. In Mark 13: 35 Christ employs these then current names of the four watches of the night in referring to the particular day of His own return—"Even, midnight, cock-crow, morning" There are two interesting allusions to the fourth watch in Matt. 14: 25, Mark 6 48, and in the connection of Christ's walking on the Sea of Galilee. The designating of the third watch as cock-crow was that of general use and not of any appointment by Christ, exactly the same as with the names of the other watches. If the origin of this name had originally any connection with the crowing of domestic fowls it is not manifest, but there was not any such connection in Christ's use of it in diverse references. Together with the naming of the watch of three hours' duration, "Cock-crow," the same name had application to the sounding of a horn or trumpet blast in military associations or by Watchmen at the beginning and ending of the watch. This fact of the times serves to make intelligible Christ's words spoken to Peter at the Last Supper and the recorded fulfilment of these later in the same night "And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice." (Mark 14: 30.) When it is remembered that three hours elapsed between the first and second sounding of the cock-crow, Christ's forecast at the Supper and the accounts in the four Gospels of the later threefold denial by Peter become intelligible. Only in Mark 14: 30 is the "twice" crowing mentioned.

The day as distinct from the night had not any such divisions as watches, and was regarded as comprising twelve hours from sunrise to sunset all the year round. In John 11: 9 there is this definition: "Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day?" Each hour was numbered one to twelve from the end of the fourth watch of the night or from six in the morning. Seven in the morning was the first hour and six in the evening the twelfth hour. The "tenth hour" in John 1: 39 was four in the afternoon. But the terms used first in the account of the creation of the existing and temporary Heavens and Earth in Genesis, 1st chapter, of day and night, are the exact and unalterable ones so long as time is measured and divided into periods. In this Divine record the term Day is first applied to the period of light when the darkness has been dispelled, and second as comprehending the two periods of light and darkness.

"God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And the evening and the morning were the first day."

This composite term **Day** is the one intended in all references to the time of Christ's bodily descent from Heaven to meet after gathering all His approved servants. Like every other day of each year so with this day of all days to His people, it will be light in some parts of the Earth and dark in others when He comes. And this "Coming," like that of His departing, will be to a particular part or spot, which will be considered later. This latter feature is a highly important one, and illustrated in the parable of Luke 12: 38, and in the night return of the illustrative lord. In this there is an exact likeness with the time of Christ's descent to the appointed meeting place with His servants. There is a likeness also to the Era preceding and ending at His return. Thus the similitude of night watches for the lord's return, in the parable, is as exact as those of the lord, servants, absence, return, waiting and watching, knock, and the blessed state brought by the return.

The fuller display of the mystical night ending at Christ's return and the literal one also when He will come, together with many other important matters connected with the Divine cause on Earth during this concluding period, presented the necessity for such exposition as was not possible in the parable of Luke 12: 36-38. This parable, in comprehending the whole Gospel Age in its scope, and all generations of believers in its waiting and watching servants, could not provide detailed and sectional exposition such as is imperatively required in the Gospel of the Kingdom. The need for other parables to display other relationships of the servants in the one under consideration; of presenting servants as labourers working for wages, has been noted previously. The supreme importance of the One Hope of Christ's return and Kingdom merits, as it receives, particular and detailed exposition of the last or concluding times, the **watching Era**, when all the living servants are **Watchmen**. This Era is of unrevealed length, and comprises the mystical night illustrated in Luke 12: 38. It is now over a century since this night of watching commenced, and it is not yet **midnight**, nor has the Lord knocked yet, nor the Cry of the Bridegroom been heard by the expectant Virgins. But the many signs of the night indicate to the wise that we are living at an advanced stage of the "second watch," and that each day now can easily be the One of His notification of approach.

V.

"TEN VIRGINS EXPECTING THE BRIDEGROOM."

The parable of the Virgins in Matt. 25: 1-13 is an exact illustration in all its features of the Divine cause on Earth during the night of watching for the return of the Lord. The first word is an adverb of time, "**Then**," and the second is the auxiliary verb "**Shall**," expressing command and promise. A changed position of the Kingdom from that of the general course of the Age, and on to the end, is both intended and marked in this commencement of the parable. "**Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten Virgins, which took their lamps and went forth to meet the Bridegroom**" It only requires careful reading of all the parables of the two different kinds to recognise the altogether different matter of this one and its setting. Never previous to the "**Then**" indicated was the Kingdom like the comparison made. And in the comparisons with the Kingdom previous to this "**Then**" the invariable form of the prefix is that of the present tense and not as with this parable, the future. "**The Kingdom of Heaven is likened**," with all the parables thus introduced, does not need any mention of a particular time, since the verb "**Is**" means "**to be**." But when a particular time of the Age is intended and a changed position of the Kingdom brought there is imperative need both for the use of an adverb of time and for the auxiliary verb of command and promise. "**Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened**."

Apart from all outside marks of identification of the time intended in this "**Then**," the ones contained in the parable itself are evidences of the final portion of the Age being intended, the last form of the Kingdom previous to the one in Glory. Never since Christ's departure to Heaven and for the long time of His absence has the name **Bridegroom** been applied to Him. In the Epistle to the Hebrews Christ's entry into Heaven and work there until His Second appearing is expounded, and His Name and Office presented as "**High Priest over the house of God**." Only in the one parable of Matt. 9: 15, and connected with His earthly life and the associations of disciples, is the name of **Bridegroom** applied to Christ until the Era of the "**Then**" of Matt. 25: 1: "**And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the **Bridegroom** is with them? But the days will come, when the **Bridegroom** shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast**"

John Baptist's testimony of the **Bridegroom** in John 3. 29 had the same connection of Christ's presence with the first constituents of the **Bride-to-be**. When the **Bridegroom** was taken away from His followers it was to fill another relationship on their behalf, and to prepare for His future **Bride a Place** in the Heavenly House of His Father. Not until the Era of His promised return and the time for the Marriage is near does He again become "**The **Bridegroom****."

In Matt 9: 15 and connected references in other Gospels where the name of **Bridegroom** was used of Christ at His first Advent the

name given to the disciples as first members of the Bride class was that of "Children of the bride-chamber" But when the Era of the **Bridegroom's** return to His people and coming to the Marriage arrives the appropriate designation of all these is that of **Virgins**, in agreement with that of **Bridegroom** and of an impending Marriage. The correspondence in all parables between the names of the illustrative persons and their diverse standing, already considered, obtains in a powerful manner with the parable of the **Virgins** Lord and slaves; householder and labourers; **Bridegroom** and **Virgins**, with an impending Marriage in view, alike reveal wondrous harmony, and which has intensified display in all parables "like the Kingdom" Just the same as that the Waiting servants in the parable in Luke 12. 36-38 could not become the Watching ones until the night of the lord's coming, so the name and standing of **Virgins** could only be given to living believers from the commencement of the Era of Christ's impending return. And the name of **Virgins** in the exact parable is that applied to all in the Kingdom, and not only to the illustrative persons of the parable. Watchmen is a mystical designation of believers, but **Virgins** is a literal one, and used for the first time in the connection of the Second Advent movement of our times. The return of the **Bridegroom**, and not only of the Lord, or Son, or Master, and the Marriage impending, are features reflected in the ten **Virgins** and their recorded experiences until the arrival of the **Bridegroom** and consummation of the Marriage.

Christ presented the matter of this parable because the Divine cause on Earth at the time indicated is exactly like it, hence the parable is actual history written beforehand in an illustrative form. Christ Himself was the Author of the narrative of the **Virgins**, and His portrayal of certain coming things on Earth in an illustrative form was of necessity governed by the knowledge of what those things were. Christ formed the illustrative matter to perfectly correspond with the known realities of the Kingdom, and not to agree with any customs of mankind. The revealed fact in the parable of the **Bridegroom** being the Lord of the **Virgins** discloses that these have the same standing of servants or purchased ones, as the persons of the parable of Luke 12: 36-38 have with their lord. The illustrative **Virgins** are not mere friends of the **Bridegroom** as with Eastern marriages of the first century, but are His servants. The recorded appeal of the foolish **Virgins**, after their exclusion from the Marriage in Matt. 25:11, reveals that with the illustrative **Virgins**, as with those in the Kingdom, the expected **Bridegroom** is also their Lord. "Afterward came also the other **Virgins**, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us." Never in the history of mankind has there been any similar going forth to meet any bridegroom, with the respective standing of the **Bridegroom** and of the **Virgins** of this parable. And any seeming correspondence with human history of the past, and the narrative of the **Virgins**, is but a coincidence, since the things illustrated by it were in the future far distant when Christ spake the parable.

In agreement with a true likeness of the Kingdom, the use of **Virgins** in Matt 25: 1-13 has application to male and female, exactly the same as "Children" has to believers in other parables. We know

this to be true with those comprised in the Divine cause on Earth, hence that it is true also with the illustrative Virgins. If no other reference in Scripture used this term in application to young, chaste, unmarried persons of both sexes, Christ's use of it in this exact parable is abundant authority for proving its dual significance. From the commencement of the Watching Era, and as indicated in Matt. 25:1, every living believer in the One Hope, and in its impending realisation, was by that belief made a Virgin. And all thus believing were separated from all others into a community of Virgins, in the Divine estimate. When the Era indicated by Christ in Matt. 25: 1, and defined as "Then" arrived, all living on Earth, and truly "waiting for His Son from Heaven," were the first subjects of the new phase of the One Hope. All these were led by the gracious Spirit to recognise from the Inspired Word the changed order of the Divine service from Waiting to Watching. The changed conditions in human affairs without, contributed to further conviction in this connection, and to fuller opportunities for obtaining light. Exactly the same as that the waiting servants in the parable of Luke 12. 36-38 knew the night of their lord's coming, so those in the Divine cause living at the Era of Matt. 25:1 knew of the changed times and seasons, and enthusiastically began to Watch for their Lord's return, and to comprise communities separate from others in their going forth to meet the Bridegroom.

The changed times from waiting to watching, and marked in Matt. 25.1, were the result of Divine operations, and not of any human appointment, as declared concerning all such changes in Daniel 2.21: "And He changeth the times and seasons." But the realised matters of Matt. 25:1 in the Divine cause on Earth, and the going forth of the Ten Virgins, manifest that these latter were enlightened, both on the times, and on the Divine purpose in these. Students of Prophecy living in the closing years of the Eighteenth Century, and those of the commencement of the Nineteenth, knew from the Times of the Divine Word that the tremendous events amongst the nations of the civilised world marked the terminus of the order of previous centuries back to the sixth. These knew that the "Time of the End" had arrived, the "day of preparation." It was concerning this Time of the End, and in the connection of the Divine cause, that the Prophet was told, and wrote, in Dan. 12: 9, 10: "Go thy way, Daniel; for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand."

The commencement of the Time of Dan. 12: 9, 10, is that also of the forecast in Matt. 25: 1, "Then." The course of the Virgin movement traced in the succeeding verses of the narrative to verse 13 is that also of the making manifest of the prophesied "wicked and wise." These latter are identical with the two classes of wise and foolish Virgins in Christ's narrative. It is by the aid of this parable and its display of the causes of foolish Virgins that the forecast of the "wicked not understanding" in Dan. 12: 9, 10 can be seen as applying to those within the Kingdom of Heaven. There would not be anything remarkable in recording that all outside of

the Kingdom would be lacking in understanding. But in view of the wonderful light and truth provided during this Era to all within the Divine cause it is remarkable that "not understanding" should be the condition amongst these.

The several other Prophecies of the "Time of the End," and relating to the national and social affairs of mankind, can be definitely located by means of the same time key in the "then" of Matt. 25: 1. In Daniel 12: 4 there is one of these, and which must be distinguished from that of verses 9, 10: "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, to the time of the end, many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." It is by this increase and diffusion of general knowledge that the living generations of this Time of the End are better able to apprehend the particular unfolding of Divine truth in the domain of the Kingdom or Divine cause. There is no reasonable excuse for absence of understanding with any brought in contact with the "due truths" of this final Era. Hence the terms "wicked and foolish" used of these within the Virgin movement by Daniel and Christ are quite distinct from any used of the bulk of mankind comprising the world around.

Not any time of the Divine Purpose on Earth since Christ's departure to Heaven is more strongly marked in history than that forecasted in the "Then" of Matt. 25: 1. Every reader of the history of our times knows of the extraordinary change in all human affairs brought at the opening of the last century. And every student of the Divine Word ought to know that the changed order marked the commencement of the "Time of the End," the day of preparation, the *Watching Era* for the Bridegroom's return, and the period of the "Seventh Trumpet" of Rev 10: 7. Within the Divine cause and from the commencement of the new Era light on prophecy and from study of the Divine Word obtained such as was unknown during previous times of the Age. And this was contred on the Second Advent and Kingdom of Christ. Numbers of large communities of Second Adventists in different countries appeared in the early portion of the century, not to mention possibly vast numbers in smaller and unknown groups. One of the largest and best known by its Prophetic presentations was that of the "Miller movement" in the United States of America. Many tens of thousands were comprised in this one movement, and these confidently expected Christ's personal return to the Earth in 1843, and, when disappointed in this, again in 1847. Other communities contemporary with this differed as to the presumed correct times of the return, but not of its impending character, and fixed earlier and later years for the greatly desired event. The remarkable enthusiasm of all those early movements was an outstanding feature, as also the unwavering confidence in the dates fixed for the Lord's return. Not any previous century of the whole Age, including the first, presented any duplicate with that of the Nineteenth, and the appearing on Earth of the New and great Second Advent movement. To compare this tremendous fact of comparatively recent history with the forecast in Christ's narrative in Matt. 25: 1-13 brings conviction to every honest mind of realised prophecy.

"Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten Virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom" This going forth with the first appearing of the Virgins, and not merely waiting for the Bridegroom to come to them, is powerful in significance, and thus by the aid of the known facts It was indeed a "going forth" or ahead of all Christ's teachings on His return, and was not authorised by Him In this exact parable Christ presents a forecast of what His people of that Era would do, and not, as in the parable of Luke 12: 36-38, what He desired and enjoined them to do Fixing dates for His return and confidently expecting these to be realised is indicated in "went forth to meet the Bridegroom" As we have considered previously, a fundamental and outstanding truth of all Christ's exposition of the time of His return is that of designed secrecy. Its year, month, day and hour are secret, unrevealed, that all His true people may be tested and found watching when He appears. The first great movement of the Gospel Age, gathered together by the One Hope and the belief of its impending realisation, learnt from experience the truths of His words. "For ye know not when the Master of the house cometh." And this knowledge came to all these after their fruitless "going forth," without any rebuke from Him save that which arose from disappointed expectations An inevitable result of making known from Prophecy of the commencement of the times of Christ's return was that of expecting the Bridegroom without further delay, hence at the dates which were regarded as fully warranted by Prophetic times

In Matt. 25:1, and in the first appearance of the Ten Virgins, a night scene is presented in the necessity for the lamps of the Virgins. That this night only commences with the first going forth of the Virgins, is later disclosed in the feature of midnight at the terminus of the narrative and the arrival of the Bridegroom. The same mystical night is associated with the parable of the Virgins as with that of the watching servants in Luke 12:38. "Lights burning" is the order for the night of the Lord's return with the servants of the one parable; Virgins with lamps is that of the other and exact parable, with "Watching" in both. The passing over without comment of the "first watch" of the night in Luke 12:38, and directing attention to the "second and third watches," finds explanation in the unrealised coming during the first going forth of the Virgins. "If he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch." In spite of this intimation that the real Lord would not come at the commencement of the Era of the return, Matt. 25:1, forecasted that He would be expected then by the Watchers, and this forecast was exactly realised in the Virgin movement. The fruitless going forth or the failure of all fixed dates marked the first watch, and as ending with the disappointments of the first communities of Virgins. It is in this connection first, and a later one to be considered, that there is the declared "tarrying of the Bridegroom" in Matt. 25:5. There was not any tarrying until the unrealised first going forth of the Virgins.

Only the Ten Virgins of all living on the Earth are expecting the Bridegroom, and have lamps. Each Virgin has and takes a lamp; there are as many lamps as Virgins. Whatever light others outside

of these Virgins may have from the one great Lamp of the Divine Word, only these Ten have individual lamps, and which give light on the One Hope to every Virgin. These ten are the only **Virgins**, as they are the only recognised constituents of the Kingdom of Heaven, at and from this new Era. To be in that Kingdom or comprised in the Divine cause on Earth, from the commencement of the Virgin movement to the coming of the Bridegroom, demands that every one shall become a Virgin and take a lamp. "Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten Virgins which took their lamps" Although the Divine Word is the One Light in the dark place of the present life, it gives no illumination save to those believing its testimonies. It only becomes a lamp to the feet of each believer in its revealed truths, and some understanding is necessary for intelligent faith "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" obtains with the Virgins of Christ's parable, as it did with the inspired writer of Psalm 119 105. But with these Virgins the One Hope of Christ's return and its impending realisation with associated truths, is the particular matter of light with each, and contained in an individual lamp. No one can believe for another, hence the stressing in Matt. 25:1, and with the first commencement of this new movement, that all comprised in it "took their lamps."

The necessity for numbering the community at its first appearance, and for its later course to the Marriage; for Ten Virgins, as in Matt. 25:1, is disclosed in verse 2 "And five of them were wise, and five were foolish" This division obtained with the first as with later movements of the community. The light available at the beginning of the Era of the return was the **due truth** for that stage and generation, and as much as the living Virgins could receive. It was not so clear or full as that of the second stage, and with the second generation of Virgins. But of the Ten "going forth" at the first only five of these had understanding of **due truth**; "five were wise, and five foolish." If all had been wise, as all were Virgins by belief in the One Hope, there would not have been need for numbering the whole community. This is confirmed by the absence of numbering with the waiting and watching servants in the parable of Luke 12:36-38. In this latter it was neither possible nor purposed to make any differences amongst the servants of the one lord and in his house, hence there was not any need for numbering them. But the fact of the differences in those comprised in the Divine cause of the Time of the End of wise and foolish, created the need for defining these in an exact likeness with that "cause or Kingdom." Another important difference between the two parables is that of the use of the **past tense** throughout in the narrative of Matt. 25: 1-13, and of the **future one** in all features of Luke 12: 36-38, save in the one matter of "**waiting**" in verse 36 where the **present tense** is employed. In all parables "likened unto the Kingdom" the use of the past tense with the illustrative persons is used, as it is a necessity. Only as the likeness is presented as fully realised, can the designed and future course of the Kingdom be compared to and illustrated by it. "Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten Virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish."

The number Ten is selected and used by Christ for the totality of the whole community. This is a representative numeral and not a literal one in its quantity, and is not at variance with a true likeness of the Kingdom. The narrative of the parable was not from actual history, but was of Christ's creation. His use of the numbers ten and five was solely for the purpose of illustrating a community divided into two different sections, and not of presenting the actual numbers of these. It is certain that many millions are comprised in the approximately three generations of the Second Advent movement of the Time of the End. Wisdom was shown in presenting these in the exact parable as Ten, with their two divisions of five each. In several uses, both in literal prophecy and in parables, this number Ten is employed as a representative one. It manifestly has this application in the parable of the Virgins as it has in that of Luke 19: 13-26. In this latter Ten servants are the comparison with the believers of the Gospel Age, and make possible the further numbering and dividing of these. The two good and faithful servants of different degrees of successful service; the seven profitable ones of a like careful attention to the increase of their lord's money, and the one unprofitable servant that was neglectful of the trust given him, are the sectional divisions made possible by the first numbering of Ten servants.

A reference in Zech. 8: 23 and a literal Prophecy of the coming Age, employs the number Ten as indicating far greater numbers than itself. "In those days it shall come to pass that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you." Since those thus taking hold are said to be out of all languages of the nations it is clear that the number Ten is not an exact but a representative one. The use of five with each section of wise and foolish is parallel with that of ten; it does not intimate anything as to actual numbers nor any equality of these in the two divisions but an effective separation. In the forecast of this movement in Daniel 12: 10 the wise Virgins are referred to as "Many shall be purified, and made white and tried," and these are comprised in the three generations of the movement. The numbers of these "Many" in the first and second generation are not revealed, but those in the last, and to enter the marriage with the Bridegroom, as in Matt. 25: 10, are twice mentioned as 144,000 in Rev. 14: 1, 3. In this latter Scripture, as in that of Matt. 25: 9, 10, living persons are the ones referred to, and as being removed from among men and the Earth without death. And in Rev. 14: 4 the same designation is used of these as that of Christ's narrative, "For they are Virgins." In the section of Rev. 14: 1-5 only the last of the wise Virgins are the ones presented; those of Matt. 25: 10 entering the Marriage and not any of previous generations. The altogether exceptional matter of Living Virgins meeting the Bridegroom and entering the Marriage without death, in the narrative, made necessary the further reference to the exact numbers of these, together with the presentation of their "Understanding" and confessed faith in the whole Purpose of God.

If the literal numbers in Rev. 14: 3, and concerning the last generation of Christ's people, were the only ones in this connection it would not be possible to form any idea as to whether they were greater or smaller than those of previous generations of the Age. But exactly the same numbers are recorded in Rev 7: 2-4 concerning the generation living on Earth at the opening of the Seventh Seal, in the Fourth Century of the Christian Era, or nearly sixteen hundred years ago. The population of the Earth at that Era was probably not more than one-sixth the present total. And this latter is more than three times greater than the population of the Earth at the opening of the Nineteenth Century. The revealed truth of the same numbers being the totality of true "servants of God" in the one generation of the Fourth Century, as the "Virgins" of the one generation of the Twentieth Century to meet Christ without death, is surely a profoundly suggestive matter. And this is made even more arresting when the vastly different numbers of mankind in each generation are recognised. Whether or not there is the intimation in this of the uniform numbers from each generation to the Bride of Christ, its bearing on the present generation is unmistakable. This latter six times the number of a former one provides exactly the same totality of approved believers, and this has its bearing on Christ's words recorded in Luke 18: 8. "Nevertheless when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the Earth."

The causes of difference between wise and foolish presented in Matt. 25: 3, 4, and with the illustrative Virgins, are a powerful likeness with the Kingdom features. "They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them. But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps." Christ framed this illustrative matter to present in unmistakable and exact imagery the realities of the Second Advent movement. Every person taking the Word of God as their enlightening guide is wise in so doing, and can only do this as there is individual faith in and some understanding of the purpose revealed therein. "The Holy Scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation; through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2nd Tim. 3: 15.) When the lamp is first taken by the individual its light directs the feet into the new "way of life," which "Way" during the Time of the End is that of Watching for the Bridegroom, and getting ready for the marriage. This latter is not anything vague, nor of mere religious sentiment, but it is that of getting understanding of the wonderful truths reserved for and disclosed during the Era of the time of the end. Love of the truth is the only impelling force, and the unfathomable love of God is alone discerned and revelled in as wisdom enters the mind from His Word. The first light received by the newly-constituted Virgin needs constant replenishing from the Sacred Word. It is by failing to thus replenish, by not getting increased wisdom, that there is the realised matter of the narrative: "They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them."

The several uses of "Took" in Matt. 25: 1, 3, 4, and the illustrations of these, are powerful marks of free choice and spontaneous action in the Divine service. The Scriptures do not present any false incentives of fear or danger in the offer of the Kingdom of Heaven.

"Took their lamps, took oil in their vessels," is the commended and illustrated course of the wise. It is by this taking, by laying hold for one's self of the One Hope, and all its treasures by intelligent belief, that each becomes a Virgin with an individual lamp. The lamp must be taken if its light is desired, and the same taking is necessary continually to preserve the first love and faith. In the Kingdom, as in the illustration of it, the oil is ever as available as the lamp for all Virgins willing to take it. In this narrative, as in all other Scriptures treating on the same subject, the sign of "oil in the vessels" indicates wisdom, understanding, of the Divine Word. The love of God shed abroad in the heart only obtains where wisdom has entered and taken her abode, for this love is unknown by all others save the children of wisdom. "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting get understanding." (Prov. 4:7.)

Knowledge presented in the Divine Word becomes wisdom when it is understood and made one's own lamp; and a reserved supply of oil is that of continual growth of understanding in the same Word. "But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." (Prov. 4:18.) In such Scriptures as Rom. 10 10, wisdom, understanding, is properly associated with the affections as well as including the intelligence. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness. . . ." Wisdom has no presence with the individual save as it abides in the effections and purifies these. The guidance and abiding presence of Holy Spirit produces wisdom, understanding of the Sacred Word, as in John 16:13. "When He the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth." Where there is absence of understanding or the presence of error, of wrong beliefs on the Purpose revealed in the Scriptures, there is evidence that the Holy Spirit is not guiding, and that the person is foolish, and not wise. As forecasted in Dan 12:10, and realised in every generation of the Second Advent movement, Wise Virgins are those with constantly increased understanding of revealed due truth, and foolish ones are those who neglect the claims of ever-increasing light, or resist these by prejudice for darkness. "And none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand."

Those who have learnt of the wealth of truth in the Divine Word reserved for its unfolding for the Time of the End, and increasing with each generation are better able than others to understand the Prophetic forecasts of "Wise and Wicked," and Christ's narrative of Wise and Foolish Virgins. To such enlightened observers it is manifest how reluctant human beings are to quickly and thankfully forsake error at the call of beautiful truth. Prejudice for cherished theories and against any interference with these by the due truth, blinds the eyes of the understanding and makes truth itself to appear as dangerous error. The gracious Spirit only leads into all truth those who are not only willing, but who are ever striving to take the necessary Oil in their vessels, and to forsake all to follow Him. The absence of any violent persecution for faith and practice, and the presence of remarkable times of tolerance and liberty, make most reasonable the Divine test of wisdom, understanding His Word and Purpose as the mark of Wise Virgins.

"While the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept." This matter of Matt. 25.5 marks the second stage of the narrative, and defines the experience of the illustrative Virgins, as a likeness with the general state overtaking the Second Advent movement after the first going forth. This, like all other features, is presented in the past tense, and as a small but correct presentation of the world-wide state succeeding that of the first appearing and disappointment of the Virgin movement. With the illustrative Virgins the going forth to meet the Bridegroom is presented as a strenuous effort, and which at its unrealised accomplishment brings a state of reaction of great weariness, causing all the Virgins to lie down and rest, "they all slumbered and slept." The display of this feature of the Kingdom is but one of many creating the necessity for the exact parable of Matt. 25: 1-13. Unlike the watching servants in the house of their lord in the parable of Luke 12. 36-38, and with whom slumber would have manifested disobedience, the Ten Virgins are not presented as being in any house but out in the open, and without any rebuke, of slumbering and sleeping. The presence of foolish Virgins with the wise has its bearing on the matter of the position of these, of being out in the open until the Marriage. The House of the Lord only contains true servants, not any false ones. The connection of the wise Virgins with this House will be manifest in later considerations and its bearing on the whole Second Advent movement.

In this exact parable those in the Kingdom illustrated by the two classes of the narrative are presented as passing into a lethargic state during the second stage of the movement. This is in contrast with the previous one of great activity and of enthusiasm over a newly-found and attractive Hope. As indicated in the first clause of Matt. 25: 5 this second state is not a temporary one, but is to last so long as the Bridegroom tarrys. "While the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept." Not until after the first going forth and its fruitless result was there any tarrying of the Bridegroom. And only in the matter of the mistaken dates fixed by mortals for His return is there any tarrying on His part. The times of the Bridegroom's return were, like all other matters of the Divine Purpose, fixed by Jehovah when He was alone in Eternity and formed His creative plans; the first of which was the bringing into being of His firstborn Son Who was long Ages after to be this Bridegroom. The momentous time of Christ's return as Bridegroom is the primary matter in the recorded answer to the query of the disciples in Acts 1: 6, 7: "It is not for you to know the times and seasons, which the Father has put in His own power."

When the likeness of "went forth to meet the Bridegroom" with the illustrative Virgins is seen in the unauthorised fixing of dates for Christ's return with the first Virgins of the Kingdom there is seen that also intended in the succeeding unconscious, inactive state of the same Virgins, "slumbered and slept." The compulsory recognition of the unknown time of the Lord's return has been brought upon all constituents of the Second Advent movement by the fruitless results of all fixing of dates by mortals. Unconsciousness in the regard of dates has for many years obtained throughout the world-wide movement, brought—in accord with the illustrative matter of

Christ's parable, as a reaction from previous "going ahead" of revealed truth. The Divine estimates of the various phases and degrees of zeal and devotion to His service, by individuals or by communities of believers in the different times and generations of the Age, are always just beyond question. The Judge and Lord of all always estimates accurately and does right in His dealings. The revelation of His estimates in this regard, such as is presented in this narrative, and in the connection of the first and second states and stages of the Second Advent movement, is an infallible guide to human understanding. By comparison with the exceptional, remarkable enthusiasm and unwearied activities of the first state of the Virgin movement, that of the second is regarded by Christ as not only an unconscious one in the regard of dates but lethargic in its activities. And this estimate does not reflect on the Wise of this second stage, since the resting or inactive condition is only that in contrast with a previous one of the same movement, and which could not be duplicated until the arrival at the third and last stage.

Just as the illustrative Virgins are the only ones presented in the narrative as sharing the state of reaction from a previous and strenuous going forth, so with the Virgins of the Kingdom. The second state of the movement has not anything in common with that of religious communities outside of the Second Advent communities, nor with the prevailing indifference to Divine truth and service in the world around. The matter of verse 7, and which will be considered in its place, discloses also the true likeness of the condition of the Virgins of the Kingdom for the whole of the second stage of the movement. "Then all those Virgins arose and trimmed their lamps." This introduces the third and last stage, and reveals that all the lamps of the Virgins have been burning during the time of inactivity and unconsciousness. In agreement with the "watchers of the night," the second watch is that of the second stage of the Virgin movement, and during this all the lamps are burning and only need to be trimmed when the Midnight Cry goes forth. The One Hope of the Sacred Word continues to shine in the lamps of the Virgins for the second watch, as it had done during the first. There is not any decrease of faith within the Kingdom and on the truth of the return and Kingdom of the Bridegroom. Rather the period where all the Virgins are unconscious of the true date of the Lord's return is in that feature in advance of the previous one, and by enjoying greatly increased light on the Divine Purpose it is more favourable to increased understanding with wise Virgins.

Thus, on all matters of the Sacred Word and its One Hope, and where all others living on Earth during the generations of the Watching Era are wholly unconscious by indifference and prejudice, the Virgins are enlightened with their lamps burning. There is not, therefore, any parallel whatever in the use of "slumber" in this parable and in application to the illustrative Virgins, and the use of the term sleep, in the literal expositions of the "Day of the Lord," such as those of Mark 13: 35-37; 1st Thess. 5: 6, 7. Sleep, as employed in these latter, has application to the complete lack of interest in Divine truth and service, and of being wholly engrossed in earthly things.

VI.

"AND AT MIDNIGHT THERE WAS A CRY MADE."

"And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him" (Matt 25 6). Like all other features, this is presented in the past tense, and as a necessity to an exact likeness with the Kingdom. The matter of the verse is such as is calculated to arouse feelings both of enthusiasm and of thankfulness, with every one really interested in Christ's return. It comprises a clear and beautiful forecast of this event, and illustrates all its features in living imagery of the most interesting character. The inestimable boon of an accurate illustration of these coming tremendous events ought, surely, to arouse in the mind of every true believer becoming appreciation. The unfortunate and prevailing theories of Christ's parables being mere mystical figures at the whim and fancy of mortals for any explanation, robs every deceived one of treasures beyond all estimate in value. "Heaven and Earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away," is the Great Preacher's testimony of His own presentations of the Gospel of the Kingdom, in Matt. 24:35.

Just as the lamps of the Virgins taken by them in the first going forth indicated the presence of night, so the middle of the same night is presented as the time of the Cry announcing the Bridegroom. This Cry at Midnight is thus at the end of the second watch mentioned by Christ in the parable of Luke 12:38: "And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch" The exact parable of the Virgins discloses first that the coming has its application to both these watches of the mystical night. It is at the end of the second watch, at Midnight, that the Cry goes forth. The short but unrevealed delay to the arrival of the Bridegroom succeeding the Cry, makes His return to be in the third watch, and at an early stage of this. This leaves the greater portion of the third and all the fourth watch as succeeding the Bridegroom's return, and preceding the Morning or Day with its glorious Sunrise and unfading light. The Bridegroom's return brings the Day Star to all the wise Virgins, but leaves darkness for the two watches of the night on the inhabitants of the Earth.

To those who have been privileged to apprehend the revealed order of events to transpire on Earth after the return of Christ, there is powerful appeal in the matter of the remaining part of the night to the "Day of Christ." All these know that the dark "Time of Jacob's trouble" forecasted in such Prophecies as Jerem. 30: 5-9; 1st Thess. 5: 1-7, succeeds the return of the Bridegroom and removal of His people from the Earth. The third watch of the mystical night commencing with the Era of Matt. 25:1 presents a suitable comparison with the gloomy period of this Time of Jacob's trouble. But, and in accord with the times of the Divine Plan, the end of the third watch, and of the Time of Jacob's trouble, does not bring the Morn-

ing. There still remains the fourth or morning watch before the Day comes on the Earth. This fourth and last watch is that portion of the night from three to six in the morning. In this mystical night this last watch is a suitable illustration of the Harvest of the Gospel Age. Christ's parables in Matt., 13th chapter, and on this Harvest, present it as the terminus of His "preaching in parables," and of the present phase of the Kingdom of Heaven, together with the associated parable of the Sheep and Goats in Matt. 25 31-46. There was not any need for speaking in parables concerning things and times beyond the Harvest, because the Day will then have come to abide as the result of His own Personal Presence on Earth. The speaking of the Son of God, written in the New Testament, was for the dispensation of the last days ending in the Harvest.

The use of the term **Midnight** in Matt 25.6, and as the time of the Cry of the Bridegroom, is in agreement with other Prophecies of the Time of the End, and concerning the religious domain. As intimated in the matter of Matt 25.1, it was night when the Virgin movement commenced, and the lamps were required by all expecting the Bridegroom. The darkness on the matters that the lamps reflect light does not decrease, but increases, all around the Virgins, as the night watches are entered. This does not correspond with human theories of our times, or popular religious estimates. The new Second Advent movement did not result in bringing the religious world in general into its own faith and Hope, nor in dispelling the indifference of the world. In secular things, and as already noted, the Time of the End is most favorable in bringing increased knowledge and other provision for human comfort and happiness. But these material benefits and favors beyond those bestowed in previous times have not resulted in increase of love and devotion to the Giver or even of thankfulness.

"This know also that in the last days perilous times shall come. . . . Evil men and deceivers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2nd Tim. 3: 1-13). It is only as the religious domain is recognised as the one of these and associated Scriptures, that the matters forecasted can be clearly identified in our times. It would indeed be false to say that the world of human affairs of our times was worse than that of the first century in its moral standards. The new leaven of Christ's gospel has accomplished much in raising humanity from lower levels, and this "raising" has diversified manifestation in the modern world. But unprecedented light on the Divine purpose has been provided the generations of the Time of the End, and the attitude to this is the matter of prophetic reference. Moreover, the manifest decay of reverence for Divine truth; loss of spiritual fibre; worldliness and love of pleasure in our times, reveal the presence of "perilous times." General ignorance and indifference prevail in regard to the supremely important matters of Christ's coming and Kingdom. And this makes the time of His return to be "Midnight," in agreement with the forecast of Isai. 60: 1, 2: "For, behold, darkness shall cover the Earth and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee." This "arising" is upon Israel.

But it is manifest that the term "Midnight," in having application to the advanced stage of the mystical night of the Time of the End when Christ's notification goes forth, is not its only significance. It has a dual application in the illustrative narrative. Some portion or hour of a particular day will be the one of His Shout or Cry, and although that Day is not revealed, nor its year, there is every cause for believing that, as in other features of the exact parable of the Virgin movement, so with the one of **Midnight**. And here there arises the matter of the different times in various parts of the Earth, as the inevitable result of the daily course of the Sun. Every day of twenty-four hours brings light in the Northern parts of the Earth, when it is night in Southern parts. And in each of these two parts there are differing times, all resulting from the Sun's course and his many meridians. Whatever day Christ's notification goes forth it will be at "**Midnight**" in one part of the Earth, even though in other parts its times will be as varied as the twelve meridians. The different times of day and night in the various parts of the Earth will determine whether **midnight**, mid-day, early morning, evening, etc., will be the time of hearing Christ's notification throughout the Earth.

And the one part of the Earth where the Notification will be heard at "**Midnight**" is the Holy Land of Palestine. This centre takes the place at the Second Advent that it filled at the First Advent and during preceding times, as the scene of Divine operations. But for the first time and for the whole of the succeeding Age of a thousand years it becomes the centre of government of all the Nations of the Earth. There has only been one **holy land** on Earth during human history, and its times of day and night are the ones of Christ's announcement of His approach and of His later personal descent. There is the same likeness in the time as in the Speaker and Voice, in the words: "And at **Midnight** there was a cry made, Behold the Bridegroom cometh."

The Cry at midnight and by the Bridegroom is the first **speaking** recorded in the narrative of the Virgins, and is indeed a most significant matter and a powerful "likeness" with the Kingdom. No Cry or spoken message is associated with the illustrative matter of the first **going forth**, nor is there any **speaking** recorded with the second stage of slumbering and sleeping. A **silent** movement until at and after the midnight Cry is the matter of illustration. The course pursued by the Virgins in first going forth and later resting was solely the result of choice and arrangement from within the movement, and not from any command or direction from without. As manifest from the illustrative matters of Matt 25:8, 9, the only **speaking** between the two classes of Virgins is that which arises out of the first speaking of the Bridegroom to both. And this latter serves to emphasise the previous absence of all conversation between the Virgins as it does the altogether different nature of the Midnight Cry to that influencing the previous course of the Virgins. The obtaining of a lamp with each Virgin and not any **speaking** of a voice from without influenced the course taken. As a true likeness all light is in the lamps of the Virgins to direct the

course of each, hence there is not any need for conversation until after the midnight Cry

The midnight Cry breaks the silence with a voice speaking in loud tones a commanding message. And the speaker is the Bridegroom himself. The only persons introduced into this narrative and as a likeness of the Kingdom are the illustrative Virgins and the Bridegroom. The absence of the personal pronoun "I" and the announcement of himself as the "Bridegroom," in the midnight Cry, is but the display of the uniform method of Christ when speaking of Himself, with few exceptions. In John 9 35-38 there is an illustration of this method in Christ's question to the man whose sight He had restored. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him? Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee." At the advanced hour of midnight the drowsing Virgins are all aroused by the loud voice of the Bridegroom with this Cry: "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." And this illustrative matter is history written beforehand, and made doubly interesting and informative by illustration.

The same matter as the Midnight Cry is presented in the parable of Luke 12. 36-38 as a knock given by the lord on his arrival home. But in this latter, and in agreement with the different kinds of parables, the future tense is the one employed "That when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately." This parable does not present the realised knocking, as the narrative of the Virgins does of the utterance of the Midnight Cry and the succeeding arrival of the Bridegroom. The lord of the watching servants is still to come and knock; the Bridegroom uttered his Midnight Cry, came to the wise Virgins ready for the Marriage, "And they that were ready went in with him to the Marriage; and the door was shut." How very marked are these differences in the two parables of the same notification and return! In the one and exact likeness there is presented as having transpired the still future realities. In the other the same realities are presented in different illustrative persons and surroundings, but as still to be realised "when the lord returns"

But in both parables there is the matter of notification by the One returning to the ones watching or expecting Him. The Midnight Cry is heard by all the Virgins of the one community, although these are two different classes of wise and foolish. The servants advised of the knock are one class only, in the house of their lord. The designating of the notification as a knock agrees with the house where the watching servants are. That of a "Cry," in Matt. 25:6, is not only in harmony with the outside position of the Virgins, but is the true likeness with the coming reality. In both parables the notification is presented as authoritative, and as leaving no doubt in those hearing it as to whence it proceeds. In Luke 12:36 it is stressed that the lord will knock on arrival and be known by this by the servants within. In the narrative of the Virgins all these latter are presented as being in a state of slumber when the Midnight Cry arouses them. If indeed any of their own community had sought to persuade the others of the Bridegroom's approach no

notice would be taken of such dreamers by their fellow slumberers. After the first and fruitless experience of going forth at the mistaken confidence and direction of fellow Virgins nothing but the Voice of the Bridegroom could cause another united going forth to meet him.

The matters of the Bridegroom being the speaker and the Virgins the only listeners to the Midnight Cry, and of this latter being that of a Voice speaking a message, requires no more proof than is presented in the exact narrative of Matt. 25.6. When this illustrative matter is realised all lands of the Earth will be the outside place where wise and foolish Virgins are. The speaking for the first time to this world-wide community of two sections by the real Bridegroom will be by a real Voice uttering a commanding message intelligible to all hearing it, and of such authority as to be unquestioned by any. There is no power or influence within the Second Advent movement, able to unite together all its constituents into one united community on the one matter of Christ's return being just at hand. Nothing could be more reasonable and convincing than the appointed and illustrated means of notification. This speaking by Christ and to particular individuals all over the Earth, without being heard by others not addressed, only commences with the Midnight Cry, although it has had very general use and illustration in previous dispensations, and with God's converse with His people. After Christ's return and the Marriage, three distinct spoken messages by Him, as to many communities of petitioners, are recorded in Matt. 7. 22, 23; Matt. 25: 11, 12; Luke 13: 25-27.

But the same Voice, speaking in the same connection as that of the Midnight Cry, finds reference in the Prophecy of 1st Thess. 4:16. In this revelation of Christ's descent from Heaven, there is of necessity the inclusion of the notification of approach, and of this being spoken by Christ Himself. But the message and those addressed are not mentioned, as they both are in the narrative of the Virgin. "For the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a Shout, with the Voice of the Archangel, and with the Trump of God." The connected matter in 1st Cor. 15:52 serves to distinguish the Shout from the Trump. The latter is shown as sounding at the terminus of Christ's descent, and as the means of raising the dead in Christ and changing the mortal or living believers. The Shout precedes the sounding of the Trumpet, hence transpires just before the Lord's descent, and as the notification of approach to the living Virgins.

"Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him" is the message of the Midnight Cry, and which is a true likeness with the substance of Christ's "Shout." When first taking their lamps all the Virgins had gone forth to meet the Bridegroom without being notified by him. But now at the Midnight hour the known voice of the Bridegroom enjoins going forth. As disclosed in Matt 25:7, and with the illustrative Virgins, the utmost of this second and last going out is that of arising from the slumbering state and trimming their lamps. If they had "trimmed their lamps" at the first movement, there would not have been the first and fruitless going forth to meet him, but only the Watching for his approach and listening for his Cry. In

the matter of Matt. 25:6, and in agreement with the powers of the human voice and its limitations, the Bridegroom's presence is indicated as being near enough to the drowsy Virgins, as to make his Cry loud enough to awaken them all. But, and as distinguishing the time of the Cry from that of the later arrival of the Bridegroom, his presence is shown as being sufficiently distant to allow time for the aroused Virgins trimming their lamps, and for the other matters recorded in verses 8, 9. The conversation between the two classes of Virgins, with the succeeding fruitless errand of the foolish seeking to buy oil, take place after the Cry and before the Bridegroom's arrival. The one purpose of disclosing all these details is that of illustrating the greater reality still to come, and not of agreeing with possibilities in human life and experience. Christ's Shout is from Heaven, hence "from a distance." But He is "near enough" to make His voice heard by all the unconscious Virgins all over the Earth, and to be recognised as His by all these. The Shout is not only a Voice loud and penetrating in its tones, but a message announcing His approach, but not the exact Day of His arrival.

"Then all those Virgins arose and trimmed their lamps." This realised matter of Matt 25:7 is presented as the immediate result of hearing the Midnight Cry. The term "Arose" involves lying down previously and in agreement with the matter of verse 5, "they all slumbered and slept." It is not said that all awoke, but "Arose," which term includes, but indicates, more than awaking. With this Arising there is the immediate "trimming of the lamps." The arising serves to further reveal the need for presenting the previous state as that of lying down in slumber and sleep. This is a second and even greater association than that of a reaction from the other and first state of confidence and activity. Without this previous state of drowsiness and lying down that of the Arising at the Midnight Cry could not be fully displayed with the illustrative Virgins.

"And trimmed their lamps" These lamps are the only thought of the aroused Virgins, and not anything regarding personal matters. The condition of the lamps is the test of admittance to the Marriage or of exclusion. The fact of all the lamps being burning when the Midnight Cry goes forth, evidences that they have been the same during the previous time of slumber. The term "Trimmed" readily reveals the intended meaning where oil lamps are the ones of illustration, and after the long time in use while the Virgins were resting. When the real Midnight Cry goes forth; when every living believer in Christ's Advent and Kingdom hears His Voice speaking, and telling of His impending descent from Heaven, there will be the tremendous reality of, "Then all those Virgins arose." And what an arising it will be! Indeed, it will make manifest to all that the previous state, with wise and foolish alike, was that of a comparatively inactive and unconscious one illustrated in the slumbering and sleeping of the Virgins of the parable. It is one thing to truly believe the Inspired revelations of Christ's return and Kingdom when these matters are unrealised, and quite another to know for certain and from the Voice of Christ, that He is just about to descend from Heaven in fulfilment of Divine Prophecy.

During the present order the only tangible evidence and proof of the coming of Christ and connected truths, is the written Word which contains the Divine promises of these. "For we walk by faith, and not by sight" Knowledge of this Word of truth that has become wisdom to those understanding its revealed Purpose of God, has called forth the exercise of the mind and affections. The only aid given by the senses is that of recognition of realised signs in human affairs, and in the material works in the existing universe. But when the real and recognised voice of Christ addresses each living believer, it is not then as it was before a matter of faith in the written Word and the wisdom brought by believing. Rather is it knowledge brought without any effort through the sense of hearing, and which does not permit of any question or doubt. And here again it is abundantly manifest that the Midnight Cry or Shout must be as illustrated in the parable of the Virgins and forecasted in 1st Thess. 4 16, a notification to the senses, a Shout heard by all addressed by it. To distinguish it from the previous method of appeals to the mind, and which demand faith for acceptance, the Notification is a Cry or Shout, which compels knowledge and acceptance of the spoken matter. The Cry is irresistible. Wise and foolish alike recognise and acknowledge this, and only the Voice of Christ speaking to each could accomplish such results.

The very mention of the **Arising** of all the Virgins at such a Cry, brings now to every thoughtful mind some faint idea of the tremendous matter illustrated in the parable. Foolish, as well as wise, are wide awake then, and both in such state of mind as was impossible when faith was the means of wisdom and Divine fellowship. The realities of the Divine Purpose will then be manifest to all in the Virgin movement, and a mighty hush pervade it on all matters of disputation and differing speculation. Every false theory will then be naked, and the believers and advocates of these overwhelmed in silence. The profound matter of "trimmed their lamps" is one of great comfort and assurance now to all those who "know whom they have believed." If personal fitness or merit were the matters signified in being "**Ready**" or of scrutiny at the hearing of the Bridegroom's Cry, then the living wise Virgins more than any others know their own unworthiness, and do not need to be further shown this. Such foolish Virgins as have indulged any vain thoughts of personal fitness to meet the Bridegroom are completely disillusioned by the Midnight Cry, and the succeeding **Arising**. With the Virgins of the Kingdom, as with those of the parable, the lamps are the matters of scrutiny; the presence or absence of understanding of the Divine Purpose, the revealed **due truth** of Inspiration. Not any in either class of Virgins has personal merit or fitness worthy of the notice of the glorious Bridegroom. "Then all those Virgins arose and trimmed their lamps."

The first disclosed result of this "**Trimming**" is that of Matt. 25:8. "And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are going out." The wise do not speak to the foolish in regard to their own lamps, nor comment on the state of the lamps of the foolish. Confident assurance obtains with the wise without need for mention to the others. In the illustrative matter every-

thing is on such a small scale, by comparison with the world-wide reality intended, that only the Great Preacher could have made it an accurate likeness. The recorded speaking of the foolish to the wise, and not vice versa, is required by the Kingdom features. This speaking is an acknowledgment of being **unready** by all the speakers, and to others who are recognised as being ready. Such is the remarkable result of the Midnight Cry, it compels recognition of wrong beliefs and confirms right ones, and forces from those previously misled by error and neglectful of **due truth** an acknowledgment of the standing of the wise and confession of its own utter failure. The lamp becomes valueless when there is no oil to keep its light shining. A professed faith in the return of Christ which does not obtain the revealed truth sent to prepare for His coming, and which is associated with human tradition in conflict with the truth, will be fully displayed to every subject by the searching scrutiny resulting from the Midnight Cry.

Although the two sections of the one community are presented in the narrative, as existing at the commencement and during the second stage as at the terminus, it is only after the Midnight Cry, and with the last or living generation, that the foolish recognise who are the wise, and that they themselves are foolish. A present mark of foolish Virgins is their inability to recognise the wise, and the means by which wisdom is obtained, and what it consists of. Those who obtain wisdom from the Divine Word know that belief of the same wonderful truths obtains with all others seeking to be ready for the Bridegroom, hence have been able to recognise those neglecting, refusing, or opposing "due truth." The Master of the House has distinguished the wise and foolish in the generations of the Time of the End, and only with the last one, and by His Shout and the succeeding "trimming of the lamps" are these fully revealed to each other. Unlike the parables which are not a true similitude with the Kingdom in some features, the one in Matt. 25: 1-13, with others of the same kind, is in all particulars a true likeness of the Second Advent movement.

Such an obvious and ever-present matter as **death** must have some illustrative place in a narrative of this character. At least two generations have passed away since the first going forth, and death is daily operating with the existing one. And here again the mind is filled with wonder at the wisdom contained in the few words of Matt. 25:5: "While the Bridegroom tarried, they all **slumbered and slept.**" This is a likeness with the whole course from the first movement and its disappointed result to the Midnight Cry. Either one of the terms **slumbered and slept** would have been sufficient as a definition of an unconscious state, if this did not comprise in the reality intended two different states, that of the living and the complete one with the dead. Drowsy or slumbering is the likeness to the unconscious state of the living, and "**slept**" to the more complete one of the dead. Sleep brings complete unconsciousness to its subjects, and is the term frequently used in all the Scriptures for the state of death. "They all **slumbered and slept**" is the illustrative matter, which marks the likeness to the reality intended of two different states. Moreover, the lying down of the Virgins during the time of the "tarrying of

the Bridegroom," and the arising at the midnight cry, distinguishes in its illustration of the Kingdom between the different persons of the first movement and those alive at Christ's coming. Those arising at His call are the living at His appearing.

As already noted, the Bridegroom's voice speaking at midnight is the first recorded speaking. No conversation takes place between the two sections of wise and foolish until after the midnight cry. And this latter does not manifest any fellowship between the two. For the whole course of the movement the Virgins are only united on the one matter of having lamps and expecting the Bridegroom. There is not any fellowship between the two sections, but only with the constituents of each. Wise have fellowship with wise, and foolish with foolish, and this, as illustrated in the narrative, obtains from start to finish. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" is the question of Amos 3: 3-6, and in the associations of Israel's walking "her own ways," and not with God. In conflict with human theories Christ's words recorded in Luke 12 51-53 are to the same effect of the dividing brought by belief in Him, and in the true Gospel. "Suppose ye that I am come to bring peace on the Earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division" Not until the coming Age does He bring peace on Earth to all living mankind, as in Isaiah 9: 6, 7. Such peace as He promised to His followers is limited to those finding it in Him, and in His Gospel, and all these can only find fellowship with others sharing the same precious verities of faith. No wise Virgins can put aside truth found by them for any human fellowship, and foolish Virgins do not desire fellowship with those holding beliefs in conflict with their own.

In Matt. 25.3, and with the illustrative Virgins, the plural is used of the speakers in the first and only conversation; all the foolish speak to all the wise. "And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil for our lamps are going out." Since all the lamps of the foolish were going out, all the owners of these are the speakers. What a tremendous, world-wide experience is illustrated in this feature of all the living foolish seeking enlightenment for the first time from all the living wise! In this and with the last generation only, the community phases are manifest with both sections of wise and foolish. It is by the "Speaking" at this juncture that the two communities are displayed to each other, as well as the individuals in each. But the dividing of the living Virgins into just two communities takes place before the midnight cry, and is the result of the attitude shown by each individual to the due truth of the Divine purpose. All believers in this, the wise, are by their belief one community all over the Earth, and separated from all opposing associations. These are largely unknown to each other, a hidden people in small groups or individuals only, but all singing the same new song. Other believers in the Second Advent, refusing or neglecting the same "Due truth," comprise many large and small communities separate from each other, but made into one large community by the attitude shown in this connection. The forecast in its illustrative form of the absence of converse between wise and foolish Virgins has been markedly realised during the course of the Second Advent movement of the

last days, as the one of Matt. 25.8, will be shortly. "And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out."

The reply of the wise to this exceptional request recorded in Matt. 25.9, and in the Revised Version, is this "Peradventure there will not be enough for us and you, go rather to them that sell and buy for yourselves" This is the illustrative matter as it is a forecast of actualities to come. All the wise thus speak to all the anxious and questioning foolish, as the living wise will do to the living foolish when the reality arrives. In the illustrative matter presented by Christ, the foolish who had been previously wilfully neglectful are now selfishly seeking to undo their serious neglect at the possible injury of the wise. Only such wisdom as Christ possessed could have illustrated this feature of the impossible granting of the request of the foolish, in the spoken reply of the wise. In advising the foolish to go to the Sellers of oil and to buy for themselves, the wise were but pointing out a course which they themselves had previously followed. This buying oil from the only Sellers is a feature of the illustration which has to be borne in mind in connection with a previously noted matter with the wise, mentioned in verse 4: "But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps." The matter of taking has been considered both with the lamp and with the oil. But the later matter disclosed in verse 9, and after the midnight cry, draws attention to the need for buying oil before it can be taken by any, and in this presents another beautiful feature of the Kingdom. Before taking oil with their lamps the wise had bought it from the Sellers. This latter designation is also in the plural both in the illustration and in the greater reality. "Them that sell."

Buying oil from the Sellers serves to emphasise that wisdom and understanding of Divine truth is not of mere human cultivation or ability, but of Divine imparting. In Matt. 11: 25 Christ thanks the Father for revealing this wisdom to some and hiding it from others. In James 1. 5 there is the injunction to ask of God for wisdom, and in James 3. 17 there is a definition of its Heavenly source and character. In 1st Cor., first and second chapters, this wisdom is contrasted with that brought by education in general knowledge; of it being a mystery, "which none of the princes of this world knew," and which is revealed to those regarded as "foolish, weak and base" by the learned of this world. This wisdom makes wise all previously foolish on the profound subjects of the Divine Purpose.

In previous dispensations Jehovah, the Great Author of Truth, was the only Seller of wisdom, and buying it from Him obtained with all His people, in agreement with Prov. 23. 23: "Buy the truth and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding." In Isai. 55: 1, this glorious matter is further defined with an added significance by its later and fuller realisation in the coming Age: "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" During the present dispensation and with the "Kingdom of Heaven" there are two Sellers of wisdom, in agreement with the matter of Matt. 25: 9, "Them that sell." These are the Father and Son, inseparably associated in administering the Divine purpose since Christ's glorification. Faith in Christ

as the Son of God is the will of the Father, as declared in John 6: 40; and this faith in the Son is to be blended with faith in the Father, as in John 5: 24. These matters are not vague nor merely sentimental, but are each of real and tremendous import, and involve understanding of the respective Words of the Father and Son. The Word of God—of the Father—has primary application to the Old Testament, the Word of the Son is comprised in the New Testament. These two united but distinguished Words are the Stores of truth, where the Sellers of oil do business with all anxious buyers. Although grace and truth are freely provided, as they are priceless in value, wisdom concerning these is only obtained by wholehearted effort with every buyer, and the assistance and bestowal of the Sellers. "And I say unto you, Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." (Luke 11: 9, 10)

The wise Virgins at the Era of Matt. 25: 8, 9 are themselves the living proof of the truthfulness of these and associated promises. All these have asked, sought, knocked with importunity and without prejudice, and have thus bought oil for themselves. The foolish have not thus bought. It is not possible in the Kingdom for wise Virgins to give their understanding to others, as all such giving is the prerogative of "Them that sell." But no enlightened believer can possess wisdom without seeking to the best of their ability to influence and attract others to buy from the Sellers. There cannot be any sharing of wisdom with others by wise Virgins, for the most enlightening knowledge only becomes wisdom as it enters the understanding of the hearer. The utmost with all exposition, either spoken or written, and with conversation and example, is to direct others to the Stores of truth and the Sellers of wisdom. "Go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves," is the powerful likeness which is to have world-wide fulfilment after the Midnight Cry. What the wise then say in reply to the appeal of the foolish is exactly what all the same wise have sought to impress on others before the Bridegroom's notification goes forth. But never before have the living wise been sought after by all the foolish for a part in their understanding. Rather the most disheartening results follow all attempts to spread abroad the knowledge of the truth and grace bound up in the due message for our times.

The conversation recorded in Matt. 25: 8, 9 discloses a likeness with the vindication of the living Virgins and a justification of their beliefs in the Divine Purpose, before the Marriage with the Bridegroom takes place. The exceptional feature in the illustrative matter—of converse between the two classes and its extraordinary character—is the same in the greater reality. Of all generations of true believers, not only of the Time of the End but of the whole Age, only the last members, the living wise Virgins, are to be thus justified in their faith and standing before all others and previous to their removal from the Earth without death. The requirements of the Divine Purpose are responsible for these two exceptional experiences with the wise living at the return of the Bridegroom, and not any suggested superiority of these over fellow believers of

previous times. The "Great Salvation," or Kingdom of Heaven, opened at Pentecost is ended when the Bridegroom comes and takes the living wise, and rejects all the living and unready foolish. The displaying of these to each other after the Midnight Cry, and the futile efforts of the foolish to obtain oil either from the wise or from the Sellers, are not only exceptional features of the Second Advent movement, but serve to display the interval between the Bridegroom's notification and His later arrival.

"While they went to buy the Bridegroom came." The foolish are presented in the illustrative matter of Matt 25:10 as acting on the advice of the wise and as leaving the wise and the place of these to go to the Sellers of oil. The matter of the foolish being away, absent, from where the wise were, and on a fruitless errand, when the Bridegroom came, powerfully illustrates the unseen arrival of Christ to all save those that are taken away by Him. This interval between the notification and arrival of the Bridegroom serves to mark another difference between the narrative of the Virgins and the parable of Luke 12:36-38. As previously noted, the knock prominently placed in the latter, in verse 36, has the same significance as the Midnight Cry in Matt 25:6. In both it is the notification of return. In agreement with the illustrative matter of the watching servants being in a house, a knock is appropriate for notifying the lord's arrival. In the same connection an immediate opening to the returned lord is required in the illustration to fully display the alert and watching servants. "That when he cometh and knocketh they may open unto him immediately." Any delay in opening would reveal unreadiness and neglect of watching for the arrival and of unheeding the notification of this. In such an illustration as this it was not desired to connect any interval between the knock and arrival of the illustrative lord. And in one important connection, which is also involved in the matters of Matt. 25: 8, 9, the immediate opening when the knock is given, is a true likeness with the Kingdom with the wise Virgins as with the watching servants.

The presence of only one class of servants, in the "House" of the Lord for the whole Age in its two periods of waiting and watching, is the truth of the Word of the Son. This obtains also with the associations of Christ's return and the ending of the Second Advent movement. One relationship which only embraces wise Virgins is illustrated in the House where watching servants are, and where the knock is given. The other, which is strictly literal in the illustrative matter of the outside position of the Virgins, is not in conflict with the mystical house of which the living wise are the last constituents. An illustration of these two distinct standings of all true believers is presented in Christ's words in John 16:33: "That in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation." It was in the world of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries that the Second Advent movement was placed, and every person embracing the One Hope and entering this movement becomes in the Divine sight a pure Virgin. But only such of these that buy wisdom and take it with them in their daily watching for the Bridegroom are members of His House. "But Christ as a Son over His house; whose house are we, if

we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the Hope firm unto the end" (Heb 3 6, 14). Thus, all wise Virgins are both outside or in the world, and inside or in the House of Christ, and this is in agreement with the distinct matters of the parables in Matt. 25. 1-13; Luke 12: 36-38

The "Knock" notifying the lord's arrival to all in his house, in the later parable, is but a particular and important aspect of the Notification which, in the exact parable of the Virgins, includes foolish also in its area. With the wise Virgins, as with the Watching servants of the other parable, the Midnight Cry has the result of "Opening unto Him immediately," and this result is recognised and acknowledged by all the foolish in the request: "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are going out." Confident assurance is brought to the wise by the Midnight Cry of their readiness for the Marriage, and is also manifest to the foolish. All the wise then know that the full Gospel they had believed and cherished had made them ready. The trimming of their lamps is indeed a joyous work, for the previous leading of the gracious Spirit into all truth had been gladly sought for and obeyed, and any prejudice and all opposing human theories readily put aside at the call and unfolding of the truth. To all the wise Virgins, as to the Watching servants, the Notification brings the end of watching, battling, occupying, and the delighted knowledge of the approval of the real Lord and Bridegroom, as beautifully expressed in Luke 12:38: "And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants." This "blessedness" commences with the hearing of the "knock"; the going forth of the Midnight Cry

The wise Virgins are ready when the Cry goes forth, exactly the same as that the watching servants are, in the other parable, when the knock comes. The succeeding interval discloses the unreadiness of the foolish, as a very necessary procedure for bringing a known ending to the Kingdom of Heaven. But this interval does not permit any getting ready by the unready. The things of faith are not obtainable when the senses are the subject of Divine operations. To share the triumph of the truth of the Divine purpose demands sharing its present fellowship and position in the world, of believing and standing for it when it is unpopular, and of sharing the very necessary training for the inheritance of the Kingdom in glory, as in 1st Peter 5:10: "But the God of all grace Who hath called us unto His Eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while," Christ's words to His followers recorded in Luke 22: 28, 29 have powerful bearing on His service in our times as in all others: "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My trials. And I appoint unto you a Kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me." There must be association with the present Kingdom of light, as in Coloss. 1: 12, 13, to have a place in the same Kingdom in glory.

For the course of the interval to the arrival of the Bridegroom, and with the foolish only, there is the illustration and forecast of their doings. "And while they went to buy." Not anything is said of the doings of the wise during the same period. This silence and absence of illustration suggests that more information on this feature is not necessary than is involved in the standing of the wise. In the

illustration the wise Virgins do not leave the Earth nor change their natures when entering the Marriage, which later is not seen by the foolish. But these mighty changes from mortals to Immortals and from Earth to Heaven, are the realities illustrated, and which involve other matters as transpiring during the interval. It would have been confusing to present the Bridegroom as continuing to speak with the wise Virgins only, after the Midnight Cry and on to his arrival, hence there is silence concerning the doings and experiences of the wise, after they reply to the foolish to the arrival of the Bridegroom. In the great reality of this feature of the narrative there is every reason to believe that when Christ breaks the silence with His "Shout" from Heaven, that silence is forever broken with His own people. All these have need for His guidance and direction in wisely arranging for the impending change, with such appointments concerning others helpless and dependent as only Infinite wisdom can make. The promise of Proverbs 3 6, which has mention in many Scriptures in differing form, has received fulfilment in diverse manners in the dispensations of the Divine Plan. 'In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.' This "directing" is as easy to Him with a spoken message—if the order of the times permit and require, as the many silent methods used during a dispensation of faith.

Concerning the order to again obtain on Earth after the ending of the Gospel Age and its Harvest, the matter of Isaiah 30:21 is in agreement with the commencing matter of Christ's Shout before His descent from Heaven. "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." As previously noted, and concerning three different communities of the living generation at Christ's return, and their spoken petitions to Christ, His answer to each is a spoken one, and unlike the method obtaining from His Ascension to His return (Matt 7:22, 23; Matt. 25:11, 12; Luke 13: 25-27). The methods used by the Divine Being during the Gospel Age, and in the Kingdom of Heaven, vary greatly with those employed in previous Ages, as well as in coming ones. The Divine Voice conversing with men was the order of the times of the Patriarchs; with Adam, Cain, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Job, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and continued through the succeeding Age of the Law and Prophets to the appearing of His Son. The Gospel Age, in its presentation of the "Great Salvation," the Royal Way of Life, is the Age of silence from Heaven, of "walking by faith, and not by sight."

Thus when Christ Shouts His notification from Heaven in the hearing of wise and foolish Virgins all over the Earth, there is evidence of the ending of the Great salvation, and of the dispensation of faith. This Voice of the Bridegroom speaking to the last constituents of His Cause on Earth of the Gospel Age is the same Voice that first preached the Gospel of the Kingdom to Israel, and in her land during His first appearing. The beginning and ending of the Kingdom are marked by the speaking of Christ's Voice in the hearing of His living people.

VII.

“THE SONG OF MOSES AND THE SONG OF THE LAMB.”

Christ's coming to living wise Virgins, and while living foolish Virgins are feverishly endeavoring to get understanding of the Divine purpose, serves to present an exceptional matter of the second Advent. Exceptional in this way, that His return is the great Hope of His people of the whole Age, and not only of the living wise. Only these latter and not any of previous generations are intended in the matter of Matt 25:10 "And they that were ready went in with Him to the Marriage." The matter of being "Ready" was enjoined by Christ on His followers of the first century, and of all later ones also, in such Scriptures as Matt 24:44, Luke 12:40: "Therefore, be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh." But it is manifest from the Prophetic forecast in Daniel 12:9, 10 concerning the Time of the End, and its disclosure of truths hidden from previous generations, that being Ready has application to understanding of these Due Truths "Go thy way, Daniel; for the words are closed up and sealed till the Time of the End. Many shall be purified, and made white and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly—and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand." In this several important matters are disclosed with powerful bearing on what is meant by being Ready during the Time of the End, and particularly with the last generation, the living Virgins that meet Christ without death.

Daniel's question which called forth the prophetic answer just quoted is recorded in verse 8: "And I heard but I understood not; then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?" That this question related to the designed sequel to the Divine Purpose is further manifest from Rev. 10:7: "But in the days of the voice of the seventh Angel, when he shall begin to sound, the Mystery of God should be finished, as He hath declared to His servants the Prophets." The same mystery is referred to in Ephes 1:9, 10 as being revealed to and through Paul, and, as forecasted in the Prophecies noted, for the understanding faith of the wise of the Time of the End. This is the summary of the Mystery in Ephes. 1.10, and which Daniel enquired about: "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven, and which are on Earth; even in Him." Such a glorious Purpose as this contains, in its revelation, abundance of associated truth, and requires from those desiring to understand it continued study of the Divine Word in its two Testaments. The forsaking of all human tradition, and putting aside of all prejudice, are essentials to obtaining wisdom in the Mystery of God. Light unprecedented on this Mystery calls for such response in the pursuit and obtaining of understanding as was not possible nor expected in times less favored with revealed truth.

As defined in Dan 12 10, the attitude to this revealed Mystery shown by all in the Second Advent movement, discloses the respective standings of "Wise and Wicked." The Inspired forecast defines "wicked" as resulting from **not understanding**, and "Wise" as interchanging with pure and true, and this as the inevitable result of wisdom in the Mystery of God. All ignorance of this revealed Mystery evidences the absence of Holy Spirit guidance and neglect of asking, seeking, and knocking, for understanding. No professed zeal for God can compensate for this neglect or provide a substitute for wisdom with the individual.

Not anything is disclosed in the Prophecies of the Time of the End as to the measure of understanding of the revealed Mystery in any save the last generation, the living Virgins that are Ready when Christ returns. In another section of this work we have noted that the same living persons are presented in Matt. 25:10, and in Rev. 14: 1-5, and that these are the "Mortal" of 1st Cor., 53, 54, and the living to be caught up of 1st Thess. 4: 15-17. In the narrative of the Virgins these are "numbered as five," but in Rev. 14: 1, 3 their literal numbers are twice given as 144,000—and the matter of their being "Ready" is made manifest. In Matt 25. 1-13 the designation, Virgins, is employed with all believing the One Hope during the course of the Time of the End, wise and foolish. But in Rev. 14: 3, 4 this designation is used only of the wise and ready who are redeemed from the Earth—from among men without death, and to the absence of any defilement with these "These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are Virgins." As previously noted, Virgins of the Second Advent movement throughout its course, as at its terminus of the Marriage, comprise male and female. Bodily defilement is not intended in this matter, for chastity of body is not limited to the community of Virgins of all living on Earth like the chastity referred to in Rev. 14: 4 is.

The absence of defilement with the Virgins is further defined in verse 5: "And in their mouth was found no guile (falsehood), for they are without fault before the Throne of God." This faultless condition is that of their confessed faith and its substance, as their freedom from defilement by Women is. The standing of these last Virgins is that of a confessed understanding of the revealed "Mystery of God" free from error; and these are the only ones of their own generation and preceding ones having this mouth free from falsehood. This religious feature of Virginity also makes manifest who the "Women" are, defiling all others save these Virgins. These same Women and their defiling of living mankind have prominence in other parts of the Apocalypse. In Rev. 17: 1, 2, 5, and at the same Era as that of Rev. 14:4, there is the universal defilement of all living on Earth by the Woman therein portrayed. "And the inhabitants of the Earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication." The names of infamy given to the defiled ones in verse 5 serve to further isolate and emphasise that of Virgins in Rev. 14:4: "The mother of harlots and abominations of the Earth." The community of Virgins are undefiled, and are the only ones free from "intoxication"; not drunk with the wine of false doctrine.

The matters of Rev. 14:1, 2, were not only signs but **miniatures** of coming realities, formed for the sight and hearing of the one witness, John. When the reality intended in this sign seen by the Apostle is realised, it will be like the sign seen and described by Him in these verses "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion, and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads." But it is to be noted that the matters of verses 3-5 were not signs nor miniatures, given to John's senses, even though they were matters relating to the same company referred to in verses 1, 2. After recording the signs of the two opening verses, the Apostle was instructed to write the exact matters of verses 3-5, as a prophetic forecast and description of the company seen by him in the later standing on the Mount Zion. This forecast relates to the previous standing and life of the same one hundred forty and four thousand on the Earth and amongst men. It is during this latter, and not after their removal to the Lamb that they "sung as it were a new song." And it is during the same that, as in verse 4, "these are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." After their removal to the Lamb they share with all others of the same great salvation the association of Rev. 17:14 with the Lamb. Moreover, it is in the exact matter of Rev. 14:4 that the designation of the company shown in the later standing of verses 1, 2, is that of **Virgins**. Not any designation is given the same company in the standing of verse 1, or when they are with the Lamb, but only their numbers and the writing in their foreheads. When taken to the Lamb they cease to be Virgins, and become constituents of His Bride. Thus in Rev. 14:3 there is the tracing back to the previous standing of the 144,000 Virgins among men, and the definition of the approved attitude of these which resulted in their exceptional deliverance without death. "And they sung as it were a new song before the Throne. . . and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the Earth." The designating of a confessed faith as a Song, and the general use of the term "New Song" to this and in contrast with the old one of unbelief, has prominence in Scripture, particularly in the Psalms, as in Psalm 40:3: "And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto God." In this also, as in Rev. 14: 3, 5, "God" is the One to whom the song was sung by David, although it was heard by all coming in contact with him. All confessed faith in the Word and promises of the Divine Being is made to Him, or, as in Rev. 14:3, "Before the Throne," even when made in the hearing of fellow mortals. Another illustration of the same matter is given in Malachi 3: 16: "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His Name."

The fact of all previous generations of Virgins and Waiting Ones also singing praises before God or The Throne, is one cause of the wording of the first clause of Rev. 14:3 in its peculiar form: "And they sung, as it were, a New Song before the Throne." No others of previous generations praising God in their confessed faith had thus sung; and no others of the living generation on Earth could

learn the same song and join with the community of Virgins in singing it before the Throne. This exceptional singing by the specified company of living Virgins has thus two applications given to it in Rev. 14:3. It is exceptional amongst the worshippers of the Father and Son of the Gospel Age, and it is exceptional to the Virgins of the generation living on Earth at Christ's return. When the living Virgins meet the Bridegroom and their fellow Virgins of all previous generations of the Age, and when all this "Great Multitude stand before the Throne and the Lamb," one song of praise is joined in by all, as in Rev. 7:9, 10. "And cried with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb.'" In this, also, it is specified that the Multitude of Singers "Stood before the Throne and the Lamb," and not, as in Rev. 14:3, that the Song was before the Throne while the singers were on Earth and among men.

"And no man could learn that song, but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the Earth," demonstrates first that the Song was learnt and sung by the company of Virgins while they were on the Earth. And that this learning and singing not only distinguished them from all others, but prepared for their removal, while alive and singing, to the Lamb. But all others of the living, like these Virgins, had equal opportunity of learning the new song, and of singing it in the hearing of the Divine Being, or before the Throne. The unsealing of the Mystery of God during the Time of the End, and particularly to the last generation, is not to any "favorites of Heaven," but to all that could learn the new Song. This "could" with the Virgins is that of anxiety to get wisdom from the only Source; freedom from all opposing prejudice, and ready willingness to "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." The "could not" of all others is the same as would not, but is required in this form to disclose the wrong state of heart as well as of will. No hindrance to understanding and joining in the new song is imposed by God on any Man, and the only inability with any hearing the Song of Inspiration, and sung by the Virgins, is that self-imposed through prejudice. The attitude of all on Earth—save the Virgin community—to the themes of the New Song, is identical with the one shown by Israel to Christ and His message. The same "Could not" with Israel, and recorded in John 12:39, is shown as would not in Matt. 13:15; Matt. 23:37.

But, and in display of the method of Inspiration, in not crowding the matters revealed with others that may confuse, the themes of the new Song sung only by the Virgins are not recorded in Rev. 14:3, nor connected references in the same section. The matters of verses 3, 4, 5 are themselves so important and profound as to demand all the space given them, and all the attention of the anxious, careful reader in apprehending them. In verse 3, and together with the mention of the new song, and of the only ones that "Could" learn and sing it, the deliverance of all these from death is specified as that of being "Redeemed from the Earth." In verse 4, and in defining the result on the Virgins of the faith expressed in the previously-mentioned song, and of their ready acceptance of all lead-

ing, the same "deliverance" from all others not ready and most unwilling, finds suitable expression "These were redeemed from among men." The last clause of this verse is another mine of truth which discloses its hidden treasures only to those who have learnt the "New Song." This company of Virgins redeemed from the Earth, and mankind, to Eternal Life, are but the first to experience this wonderful introduction into Eternal Life, although they are the last of the believers of the Gospel Age to enter the Marriage and share the nature of Christ. The "Second resurrection" over a thousand years later provides an immensity of subjects to enter Eternal Life without death, which justifies the terms used in the last clause of Rev. 14:4. "The firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb." In verse 5 the same matter of the new song finds further definition, with a second and associated reference to the Throne of God. "And in their mouth was found no falsehood, for they are without fault before the Throne of God." Like as with the Song, so with the Mouth singing it; both are in the singular, although the singers are 144,000 in numbers. All those learning and singing the one song are pure and true in their confessed faith, and are thus recognised before the Throne. Not any can learn the song or take it into the mouth save those free from all guile.

The themes of the Song are recorded in Rev. 15: 2-4, and in a section presenting the signs of final operations of the present Age. In this second sign of the one community their standing while singing is presented, and is but another form of that indicated in Rev. 14: 3-5, of being undefiled and pure in their faith. The obtaining of this isolated standing is shown as resulting from what has been learnt, as in the previous signs, and not of anything done by the singers. The sign of One company in the one standing, and of this marking, all comprised in it as Victors over all human systems and their false teachings, is the first view, in Rev. 15:2. The parallel with Rev. 14: 3-5 is manifest to careful reading. Just as there is only one company of Virgins at the Era indicated, so with the Victors over all human teachings concerning the things of their faith. And with the standing shown in the sign of Rev. 15:2, there is the same matter as with the undefiled one of the previous signs, viz, that it is only manifest to God or "before the Throne." This estimate with the marks of identification of its subjects has been written for the guidance, assurance, and comfort of all entering the state of wise Virgins in the last generation. The two-phased song of Rev. 15: 3, 4 is responsible for the privileged and isolated standing of the singers, as presented in verse 2, and all joining in this clearly-defined song can be certain of sharing the standing shown in the sign.

The formation of a sign for John to see and write, defining a standing which is only recognised "before the Throne," or by the Eye of the Almighty, is responsible for the wording of the first clause of Rev. 15: 2: "And I saw, as it were, a Sea of glass mingled with fire." Not only was this description the best that could be given of the sign presented to the sight of the Apostle, but its form was in agreement with the designed purpose of its revelation, and the associated imagery in this and other Chapters of the Apocalypse.

Three times, in succeeding verses of the same Chapter, there is mention of the "Temple," and these also as signs of the Divine cause at this Era, or of the Kingdom of Heaven, as other references to the same Temple in other parts of the Apocalypse are to previous or later times. The sign of the Sea of glass, with all the Victors standing on it, has not any parallel with historical matters such as the deliverance of Israel through the waters of the Red Sea from the power of the pursuing Egyptians. No enemies pursue these Victors; a mental conflict is the one they have been successful in. Their standing was illustrated to the sight of John by a sign taken from the Temple arrangements and furnishings, and not connected with anything in human history, or in physical nature. The only other Sea in any way parallel with that of Rev. 15:2 is the much bigger one in the signs of Rev. 4:6, and which is as extensive as the created universe, and as firm, clear, and pure to the Eyes of the One on the Throne as "A Sea of glass like unto crystal"

But the glassy Sea in the sign of Rev. 15:2 was that of a contained, and not immeasurable, Sea. It was of such dimensions as to provide for the standing of the one community, and it had the significance of safety to all these. When John saw the wonderful sign he knew what the Sea signified in it was intended to represent, but by being composed of glass, and not of water, and large enough for 144,000 persons to stand on, he used the words, "And I saw, as it were, a Sea of glass." In the features of being contained, of having a limited area and of its Temple associations, the furnishings in the court of Solomon's Temple provide the intended matter of comparison more completely than the smaller ones in the Tabernacle in the Wilderness. 1st Kings, 7:23-25 records this matter: "And he made a molten Sea, ten cubits from the one brim to the other; it was round all about, and its height was five cubits." This Sea was the Laver wherein the Priests washed their hands and feet when entering the court, for the services of the Sanctuary. The matter of Exod. 30:18-21 has powerful significance in its bearing on the matter of the sign of the glassy Sea, in Rev. 15:2. "For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and feet thereat. So shall they wash their hands and feet, that they die not." The Laver in the Temple was for the preserving of the ministering Priests from death, by cleansing them from defilement.

Together with the Laver the only other furnishment in the court of the Temple was the Altar of sacrifice. This latter as a sign of Christ's accomplished atonement for all sin, and the place of justification for believing sinners, has diversified mention in the Apocalypse as in the Epistles. In Heb. 13:10 Christ the Altar is presented as the place and means of food, eating, or of being built up after believing and the realisation of the comparison of Christ as the "bread of life." In 1st Peter 2:5, and in the standing at this Altar of true believers as a "holy Priesthood," there is the definition of the life's worship of these "To offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Thus being justified from all things by the Altar; living by eating its living bread, and worshipping as sacrificing Priests, is the order of life in the Kingdom of

light. And as in many references such as Rev. 2:10, death at the Altar is the terminus of the life of faith and worship. "Be thou faithful down to death, and I will give thee a crown of life" It was concerning the necessary form of death appointed for Peter that Christ, in forecasting this, as in John 21:19, "signified by what death he should glorify God." Not only death, but also its form, is with each at the Altar of Divine arrangement.

Living and dying at the Altar brings to each of the dead the state of being covered by or placed under the Altar, until the glorious resurrection. This state of the blessed dead is that of "dying in the Lord," of being the "dead in Christ," as distinguished from the all dying in Adam, and not under the Altar. These latter are to be later made alive in Christ, in a later or second resurrection, with the different and lesser "glory of the Terrestrial." In Rev. 6:9, and where the particular reference is to the many martyrs of the Diocletian persecution for the ten years from 303 to 310, A.D., the death state of those dying in the Lord is thus defined: "I saw under the Altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the Testimony which they held." John only mentions the particular ones seen by him in the signs of the opening of the fifth seal, and not the only ones under the Altar. In the associated and powerful signs to the hearing of John, of verse 10, and his sight in verse 11, another beautiful connection of "blessedness" is presented. "And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little while." These and all others of the dead in Christ wore the robes of imputed righteousness down to death, but this sign of giving each a white robe while resting under the Altar in death, indicates the certainty of all these partaking of the nature and glory of Christ, and thus anticipates their glorious resurrection. They have been faithful down to death, and are certain to "Walk with Him in white," as in Rev. 3:4, after they have rested for a little while.

In all these matters of the Divine service of the Gospel Age, the Altar is the only furnishment of the Temple court introduced as a sign of the greater reality, of the standing in Christ of all His believing people. And it is manifest, that if being faithful down to death was to be the unchanged order with the last generation, as it has been with all previous ones of the Age, there would not be the introduction of another sign of a different furnishment of the Temple court. The matter of Rev. 15:2 is the only one where the sign of the Laver Sea is associated with the standing of one company of Christ's living people on Earth. All others have lived at the Altar, died at it, and are resting under it when the Bridegroom comes. And the company standing as Victors on the glassy Sea are just as much partakers of the Altar as all the dead in Christ. Hence in that fundamental matter of a perfect standing before God, they share the one and only true foundation referred to in 1st Cor. 3:11: "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." The standing on the glassy Sea is a particular and isolated manifestation of the one standing at the Altar, and not a different nor superior

The section in Rev 15. 2-4 is necessary for the elaboration of the themes of the New Song mentioned in Rev 14: 3-5, and to show forth in an approved sign the standing of the victorious singers. In the latter Scriptures there are the two phases of their redemption mentioned, from the Earth and from among men, and their twice mention of freedom from defilement. The sign of the glassy Sea in presenting their standing in the sight of God embodies both features of redemption by God and absence of defilement in the redeemed ones. The Laver Sea is the sign of the exceptional redemption, and this comprising glass, and not water, as with the Lavers of the Temple in Israel, signifies the undefiled basis of this deliverance. The redemption in Christ Jesus to Eternal Life, with all generations to this last one, was from death. But the same glory of God that required this dying of all in Christ is accomplished in redeeming without death all those learning and singing the New Song, and thus being freed from the defilement of error, in the living generation at Christ's return. In His estimate, this latter is as great Victory over the world as that of faithfulness down to death, and His purpose of the Ages requires this redemption of a living company at the return of His Son. To distinguish this particular redemption from that provided for all at and under the Altar, and as displaying the exceptional freedom from all error of all sharing it, there is the isolated sign of a Sea of glass with the Victors standing on it.

The Laver Sea in Israel's Temple was for cleansing, and was composed of water. Those justified by faith, in and living at the Altar of Christ, need no presumed cleansing by water or by any mere ordinances. The community standing on the glassy Sea, like their fellow believers of all previous times, are purified by their contact with the Altar, and by the daily washing of their robes indicated in Rev. 7: 14: "And have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb." It is on account of their undefiled standing in the Divine estimate, that the Laver Sea, made of glass, is the sign of an unyielding, pure and transparent faith in the revealed purpose of God. And this same Sea, with the undefiled ones standing on it, instead of as with Israel's Priests washing in it, is also the fulfilment in an absolute sense of the typical feature of Exod. 30 21: "So shall they wash their hands and feet, **that they die not.**" This "dying not" with the Priests of the Tabernacle only referred to hindering sudden destruction if washing at the Laver was not done, and not even to perpetuation of human life. But the sign of the Laver Sea of glass is the Divine intimation that the company of redeemed and undefiled ones singing the New Song of Moses and the Lamb are marked for Eternal Life without death. "**That they die not,**" or as in John 11.26, and its first fulfilment: "And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."

"And I saw as it were a Sea of glass mingled with fire." Not "mingled with red colour as of fire," but with Fire. The glass in the sign was clear, transparent, but darting flames of fire were all over its surface whereon the Victors were standing. This was quite different to the tints on the water in some Seas of the Earth being

responsible for the names given them, as the "Red Sea." The sign of Fire on the surface of the glassy Sea has powerful significance in agreement with the other features of Rev. 15:2. Those who have "gotten the victory over the beast," and all connected with its false teachings, have nothing to fear from human systems, like their brethren of previous times had, as in Rev. 13:7: "And it was given him to make war with the saints and to overcome them"; and Dan. 7:25: "And shall wear out the saints of the Most High." There is not any "making war on nor wearing out of these Victors by violence of human systems on account of their victory of faith. But the undefiled standing in God's sight is not obtained nor maintained apart from such severe testings as He appoints. It is by conflict that the victorious standing is obtained, and severe testings of the faith confessed continue with each down to the Bridegroom's notification. It is by the Fire on the glassy Sea that the verdict of Rev. 14:5 is arrived at. "For they are without fault before the Throne of God. In their mouth was found no falsehood." In the prophetic forecast of Dan. 12:10, and of the course and terminus of the Virgin movement, there is the combining together of the privileged standing and testing of the Wise. "Many shall be purified, and made white and tried." This is identical in meaning with a Sea of glass mingled with fire, with the last of the Wise. It is as true and necessary with these as with the believers of all previous times, and as declared in 1st Peter 1:7. "That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found with praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1st Cor. 3:13).

"Stand on the Sea of glass, having the harps of God." This latter feature of Rev. 15:2 is additional to the definition in Rev. 14:3, and where only the singing of the new song is recorded, with the numbers of the singers. The source of the Song is here indicated. This "New Song," like that of David's mentioned in Psalm 40:3, does not originate with the singers; it is "put in the mouth," and is the melody of the Harps of God. Thus, the singers are also "harpers," and it is from the Harps that the themes of the Song are put in the mouth of those singing before the Throne. Harps of men are musical instruments, and the selection of the harp out of all musical instruments of men as the sign of Heaven's melody in creation and redemption, witnesses to its sweetness. It is evident that the Poet Cowper had some understanding, both of what the Harp of God was, and of its ravishing melody, when he wrote in "The Task":

"Sweet is the Harp of Prophecy; too sweet
Not to be wronged by a mere mortal touch;
Nor can the wonders it records be sung
To meaner music and not suffer loss."

We have previously considered several comparisons of the Divine Word in its two Testaments, and in each it fills every requirement. It is the one connecting bond with Heaven; the one Witness on Earth of the Invisible God; the one key to human origin and destiny, and the same with the material Universe. And it is in its two parts

of history and prophecy, and its two Words of Father and Son, the great Harp of God. Like the lamps of the Virgins in Matt. 25: 1-13, so with the Harps in Rev. 15:2, the one Harp of God becomes as many as the Victors by individual faith and praise learnt by each. Every harper has this Harp, and joins in the one Song inspired by it. All the melody and sweetness of the Divine purpose in creation and redemption is contained in the Harp, only waiting for trained harpers and singers to bring them forth in becoming praise to Him that sitteth upon the Throne. It is in agreement with this latter that the first mention of "having the Harps of God" is with this last company of Virgins, and is parallel with the matter of Rev. 14:5: "And in their mouth was found no falsehood." Never previously has the whole community of approved believers in any generation been united in the one song, and this without any error in the united offering of praise and confessed faith. To confess truth only does not involve the impossible to mortals of knowing all Infinite truth.

This Song from the Harp by being a New One, as in Rev. 14:3, is not any repetition of any previous song by others in totally different circumstances. This is abundantly manifest also from the themes of the new Song in Rev. 15:3, 4. Unlike Israel's song of deliverance from the Egyptians and the Red Sea, in which Moses joined, the singers and harpers on the glassy Sea make no mention of themselves nor of their experiences. The latter prophecy by Moses concerning things in the latter days for the people of Israel, and designated in Deut 31. 22, 30, a "Song by Moses," finds no duplicate in the New Song of Rev 15:3, 4, and which is sung by believing Gentiles mostly if not wholly. New and wonderful enlightenment on the Divine Works and Ways learnt by each singer from the great Harp of God fills the mind and heart, and finds expression through the mouth in praise unto God. There is neither prophecy nor any personal reference in the themes of the New Song, but only those which send back again to the Gracious Maker of the Harp the melody which He placed in it.

"And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb," is the first definition in Rev. 15:3. Here are two themes in the one utterance of praise, distinguished by the application of song to each. This division is further shown in the succeeding matters of the verse: "Great and marvellous are Thy Works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy Ways, Thou King of Nations." The reference to the "Works" not only agrees with the designation of Almighty, but also with the particular theme defined as the "Song of Moses." Exactly the same with the reference to the "Ways" and the use of the designation of King to God, there is the connection with the second theme of "The Song of the Lamb." This key provided in the reference to Works and Ways, with the two distinct designations of the Divine Being as Almighty and King, further explains what is intended in the matter of "They sing the Song of Moses the servant of God." The several standings of Moses in the Divine service with Israel, made necessary some clear and unmistakable definition as to the particular one intended in this matter. With all other Prophets Moses was used in presenting the materials

for the Song of the Lamb, the second theme of the New Song of Rev. 15:3. But neither his name nor that of any other man is presented in that connection. And no other man had any part or place in receiving and writing the material for the first theme of the New Song save Moses, the servant of God. It was Moses whom God selected and used to receive and write the account of creation, and of the nature and design of the material Universe. But in no sense was the receiving and writing of the Revelation of the Divine Works by Moses, a Song sung by him to God.

Exactly the same obtains in the mention in Rev. 15:3 of the "Song of the Lamb." This latter does not relate to anything sung by Christ, but to the truths of Inspiration concerning the Divine purpose realised in and by Him. It is in agreement with the order of Divine Revelation that the first mentioned theme of the New Song should be that of the "Song of Moses." The created Universe of Heaven and Earth, with its kingdoms of living creatures under the dominion of man, was the first theme of Inspiration and the basis of all later ones. Only the One Who made all things knew how and when they were made, what their places and functions were, and the purposes to be realised in and by them. Apart from His Revelation of these Works, not to mention moral and spiritual matters, no mortal knows anything of the origin, nature and purpose of the created Universe. Although all rational beings recognise something of the greatness and grandeur of the Works of God, and many have spoken of these as great and marvellous, as in the New Song of Rev. 15:3, this sentiment is generally but the result of observation, and not of true and instructed wisdom. But the words "great and marvellous are Thy works," as presented by the singing victors, are the expression of wisdom on these works gathered from the Harp of God.

The new feature of this praise, and in the theme of the Divine Works, is manifest in the fact and need for the revealing of the matters of Rev. 15. 2-4. Never before had such a company as this occupied the standing recorded, nor presented to God the particular form of praise mentioned. If the whole matter of this glassy Sea had not been New, it would not have been presented as an important section of a forecast of the last days. If others alive on the Earth at this Era had also "Harps of God," and were singing a two-phased Song from the Divine Harp to the Almighty, there would be neither need nor force in the presentation of the victors on the glassy Sea. But in Rev. 15:2 the prevailing theories held by all others in the living generation on the Divine Works are included in the things over which these Singers "had gotten the victory." Moreover, and as definitely declared in Rev. 14:3, the Song sung by the Virgins is not only a new one, but "No man could learn that Song but the hundred and forty and four thousand." When these victorious singers address the One on the Throne, and in the hearing of those willing to listen of living mankind, "Great and marvellous are Thy Works, Lord God Almighty," they bring this melodious praise from the Harp of God. They learn the nature of His Works from His Word.

The singing of this Song of Moses by the one company on the glassy Sea, and as part of a New song, is responsible for the wording

of Rev. 14 3 first clause: "And they sung as it were a New Song." It is new in some connection, and not in others; not any others previously praising God in regard to His Works have had the enlightened standing of these last singers. But all those who are to meet and reign with Christ, of the whole Gospel Age, have included in their confessed faith the substance of the Song of Moses. This is intended in the words of Rev 14.3 first clause, as it is definitely revealed in such Scriptures, as Rev. 20 4 middle clause: "Were beheaded for the Witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God." All those who are to live and reign with Christ have lost their own wills and false beliefs of the Divine Word, and accepted the ones expressed in the two Words of Father and Son. But only the last company of these in singing the Song of Moses "have gotten the victory" over all opposing and universally prevalent theories of men concerning the Divine Works. And this victory is brought to them by the revealed wisdom from the Divine Word, which "wisdom" was not available to previous generations. All these Victors can say with the young Prophet addressing the King of Babylon, and as in Dan. 2.30: "But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living." Like Daniel, they have learnt from above the wisdom and melody of their praise to God concerning His Works, provided by the Harp of God.

Their Victory is all the more marked because, and as indicated in Rev. 15:2, the universal state is that of opposition to the substance of the Song of Moses, and which obtained also with each of the Victors previous to their "learning" the Song. In associated Prophecy there is confirmation of this prevailing state of the "Last Days." And this matter of the Divine Works and false theories of living mankind concerning them, with religious and irreligious alike, is one reason why, as in 2nd Tim. 3:1, "In the last days perilous times shall come." These false theories with those professing the Name and service of the Divine Being disclose "walking after their own lusts or desires," in preference to "learning the new Song." Not the early days nor the middle Ages, but the "Last Days," are the ones in 2nd Peter 3: 3-7 specified as presenting the prevailing state of "scoffing" at the teachings of the Divine Word on the Works of creation. And this has the injurious result also on living mankind of creating unbelief in and indifference to the Second Advent of Christ. "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts." Any understanding of the Song of Moses sung as a New one by "them that had gotten the victory" over all opposing theories, brings recognition at once of the theory of the Universe which has for the past four centuries been named after its human author, "the Copernican or Heliocentric theory." Professor Copernicus was contemporary with Martin Luther, the great Reformer, and first presented as a mere speculation a "System of the Universe" in fundamental conflict with the Divine account of creation given through Moses.

This speculative theory was accepted by the civilised world as truly Scientific, and its opposing features to Divine Revelation have been added to in each generation since its conception. Unconsciously, as well as consciously, the prophesied "Scoffing" at the

Divine Word prevails in the "Last Days," and the warning of 1st Tim. 6 20 has powerful application: "Avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of Science falsely so called." To affirm that the Bible teaching of a level and fixed Earth as the great centre of the existing creation is true, is generally regarded by religious and irreligious alike as displaying ignorance. The opposing theory of a "Whirling Globe" with incredible and purposeless pace through Infinite Space, and of this "Globe" being an insignificant part of the Universe, is accepted without an atom of proof, and as the fiat of Science. Many a Missionary has found it difficult to explain to enquiring minds in *Heathen Lands* how the Bible can be the Word of God if its teachings on the Divine Works are unscientific, utterly false.

Not until recent years was it deemed necessary to investigate the matter of a Whirling Globe, and ascertain if indeed there were any proofs of the declared terrific motion of the Earth through Space. This latter was assumed to be so self-evident as not to require any further demonstration, in defiance of such reasonable exhortations as that of 1st Thess. 5:21: "Prove all things; hold fast to that which is true." The following extract from a Work published in London in 1922, by an accomplished Astronomer, whose own investigations convinced him of the falsity of the popular theory, is very suggestive ("Kings Dethroned," by Gerrard Hickson):

"In the year 1907 the author made a remarkable discovery. . . . The fact he had discovered was demonstrated beyond all doubt.

"The author has taken the unusual course of submitting these new and startling theories for the consideration of the general public, because the responsible scientific societies in London, Washington, and Paris, failed to deal with the detailed accounts of the work which he forwarded to them in the Spring of 1920. He believes that every newly-discovered truth belongs to the whole of mankind, wherefore, if those whose business it is to consider his work fail in their duty, he does not hesitate to bring it himself direct to the people, assured of their goodwill and fair judgment.

"It would seem that Copernican Astronomy had reached its highest development about the year 1882, and then began to decline, or, rather, to fall to pieces. The first evidence of this devolution is to be found in the Michelson-Morley experiment in 1887, at Chicago, the result of which might have undeceived even the most devoted believer in the theory of a spinning Earth.

"Professor Michelson was one of the physicists foremost in determining the velocity of Light, while he has recently been described in the New York 'Times' as America's greatest physicist; and it was he who—working in collaboration with Professor Morley—in 1887 made the most painstaking experiments by means of rays of light for the purpose of testing, verifying, or proving by physical science, what really was the velocity of the Earth. To express this more clearly, Astronomers have for a very long time stated that the Earth travels round the Sun with a speed of more than eighteen miles a second, or sixty-six thousand miles an hour. Without in any way seeking to deny this statement, but really believing it to be there-

abouts correct, Professors Michelson and Morley undertook their experiments in order to put it to a practical test

"More technically, the experiment was to test the velocity with which the Earth moved in its presumed orbit round the Sun relative to the Ether. A very well-illustrated account of that "experiment" will be found in "The Sphere," published in London, June 11, 1921, and it is from this article I quote the following verbatim: "But to the experimenters' surprise no difference was discernible. The experiment was tried through numerous angles. But the motion through the Ether was NIL." Observe that the means employed represented the best that modern physical science could do to prove the movement of the Earth through ethereal space, and the result showed that the Earth did not move at all. "The motion through the Ether was NIL." But the world of Astronomy has not accepted that result, for it continues to preach the old dogma, it appears that they are willing to accept the decisions of physicists when it suits their case, but reject them when otherwise. And so they still maintain the fabulous theory that the Earth is rushing through space at eleven hundred miles a minute.

"Not content to believe that the Earth did not move, further experiments were carried out, to test the Earth's velocity in relation to the Intensities of Light from the heavenly bodies, but these failed to discover any movement. Even then Astronomers were determined to hold on to their ancient theories, and deny the facts which had been demonstrated by the best means known to modern science. They preferred to believe the theory that the Earth was gyrating round the Sun with the velocity of a Big Bertha shell, and tried to account for the physicists' failure to discover its movement by finding fault with the Ether. It is not only difficult to understand why they should prefer theory to fact in this manner, and so deceive themselves; but it is strange also that the world in general could tolerate such nonsense."

This unbiased testimony from an accomplished and honest man, and apart from any reference to the Word of God on the same subject, bears witness to the veracity of the Divine account of His own Works. It also discloses the flimsy basis of the "Whirling Globe" theory, and how groundless is the "Scoffing" at the presumed "unscientific" teachings of Inspiration. The Mosaic account of creation and definition of the Works of God needs no apology, but is the most advanced Scientific presentation extant. Apart from this "account" there is no information available to seeking minds of the origin and nature of the existing creation. The believer in Inspiration can confide without doubt or anxiety in Genesis and its revelations, as the exact truth of Him Who made all things. The unwillingness of modern Scientists to accept their own findings on the complete absence of any motion of the Earth, needs no added comment from us to that made by Mr. Hickson, and quoted above.

To get understanding of the revealed Divine System of the Universe is indeed a "Victory" over the opposing and prevalent "Copernican theory." Those readers who have been privileged to learn the Song of Moses and the associated entrancing Song of the Lamb will readily recognise in the very condensed summary of the

following presentation some of its harmonious chords. And all such learners daily find—in the use of their senses and enlightened reason—the most wonderful confirmation of the Science of Inspiration, in the visible and diversified “Great and marvellous Works” of their Father. In this domain, and unlike that of the Song of the Lamb, humble and intelligent faith receives abundant confirmation through the sense of sight and the use of reason, and which makes the simplest wise with a wisdom from above.

The first verse in Genesis in its summary of a previous creation of a Heaven and Earth also introduces the later detailed account of the making of a second Heaven and Earth as the scene of human history. “In the beginning God created the Heaven and Earth.” These two parts comprised the first creation, as the two parts made during the Six Days long after “The Beginning”—and in the detailed order and formations of Gen. 1: 3-31, comprised the second or existing creation. In the first, as in the second, the Heaven was a material work designed and fixed for enclosing the appointed area from the illimitable one of Space without. The first Heaven was as material as the Earth enclosed by it, but unlike the Earth it passed away without leaving any traces or ruins. But Gen. 1:2, in presenting a waste and ruinous Earth covered with waters, and over which darkness prevailed, not only manifested the absence of the first Heaven, but that the first Earth was that of a particular surface. As later disclosed in connected parts of the Song of creation, such as Job 38: 4-7, Psalm 102.25, Proverbs 8:29, etc., the Earth was fixed on Eternal and immovable foundations; “that it should not be moved for ever” is the further testimony of Psalm 104.5. These later elaborations with those which explain the causes for the destruction of the first creation, and all its inhabitants, serve to make Gen. 1.2 intelligible. “And the Earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” As declared in 2nd Peter 3: 5, 6, these Waters were the means of destruction, both of the first Heaven and Earth, and of their inhabitants; and these latter are referred to in 2nd Peter 2: 4 as “The Angels that sinned.”

The rearrangement of the existing ruined Earth at the Era of the **First Day**, and the making of an entirely new surface for human history, was the revealed work of making the second Earth. But, as in Gen. 1: 9-13, this work was that of the “third day.” The first day’s work was that of flooding the ruined and darkened watery scene with light; which light was diffused and not contained in light-bearers such as those of the Sun, Moon and Stars, made on the fourth day. The continuance of this light made on the first day, in the vault of Heaven, is manifest in the unthinkably vast masses of “luminiferous Ether” and with which is associated the mighty electrical energy that sweeps the Lights of Heaven in their diverse and appointed courses, of “lighting the Earth.”

Whatever was the form and material of the first Heaven, and how it ministered to the first Earth in light, are matters not revealed. But there was need for making another Heaven for the second Earth, to enclose the latter from Infinite Space without, and so make the Earth the great scene and centre of the second creation.

The second Heaven was called by God a Firmament, and when made and fixed above, and to the Earth's level surface, in a beautiful circular formation with an exquisitely shaped dome, it was the Heaven of the Earth as distinguished from the higher and greater Heaven of the Almighty's Home "And God made the Firmament . . . And God called the Firmament Heaven." By being "Made," and as in Psalm 19 1, "showing His handiwork," it is as material as the Earth but of a different texture. In Job 37 18 there is this mention of the same Firmament: "Hast thou with Him spread out the Sky, which is strong, and as a molten looking-glass." This same "Molten" composition of the Firmament is involved in 2nd Peter 3.10, and where its future consumption at the end of the Millennial Age, by fire, is referred to. "The Heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." These elements include with the metallic substance of the Firmament the two remaining Lights of Sun and Moon, for as forecasted in Matt. 24 29, all the Stars are removed from Heaven at the end of the coming harvest, or more than a thousand years before the great conflagration. This vast and mighty erection of the Firmamental Heavens is referred to in Isaiah 40.22 as being "Stretched out as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in." The same comparison to a tent or Tabernacle, and to its temporary continuance and future destruction by being dissolved, is made in 2nd Cor. 5:1: "We know that if this earthly house of our Tabernacle were dissolved." And like as with mankind, and with the different economies of the Divine plan, "waxing old and decaying" is the order of the existing creation revealed in such Scriptures as Psalm 102. 25, 26: "And the Heavens are the works of Thine hands. They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed."

But another highly-important matter stressed in Gen. 1:6, 7 is that of the vast reservoirs of waters above the Firmament, for the sustaining of life on the Earth for the course of human history, and sent down as "rain from Heaven." Without this provision the supplies of water for the thirsty Earth and its living kingdoms would quickly be exhausted. The Seas and Rivers are constantly replenished from the immense "waters above the Firmament." All condensation and evaporation by the Sun's rays from the waters on the Earth, when sent down again, is defined in Gen 2:6 as "A mist from the Earth," compared with Rain from Heaven in the greater provision from the mighty reservoirs above. This feature of associating Rain with the waters above the Firmament; of it being sent by God, and not by the operation of natural laws, is manifest in all Inspiration. All droughts are the result of the Heavens being closed, and not of any lack of functioning with the Sun's service. "For He maketh His Sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." (Matt. 5.45). "In that He did good, and gave us rain from Heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." (Acts 14:17). "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the Earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the Heavens gave rain, and the

Earth brought forth her fruit" (James 5:17, 18, 1st Kings 17:1). The matter of Gen 1 6, 7 makes manifest that the rain supplies for the course of the history of the second Heaven and Earth were made and stored above the Firmament, to be sent down at the Divine discretion and command. "And God made the Firmament, and divided the waters which were under the Firmament from the waters which were above the Firmament"

In the account of Gen 1 9, 10, and the making of the new surface of the second and existing Earth, the waters all over the surface of the ruined first Earth were retained, and directed into one prepared place. These waters were brought on the surface of the first Earth as the means of destruction, hence were not there previously. The "one place" on the existing Earth of the Seas is that of some two-thirds of its surface. The remaining third of "dry land" is located in different parts of, and above, these waters, including vast numbers of Islands, without interference with the "one place." The Seas have uninterrupted flow all around the surface of the level and fixed Earth, with impassable bounds all round its circular extremities, as in Job 26 10 and Revised Version: "He hath described a boundary upon the face of the waters, unto the confines of light and darkness." These "confines," as verified by navigators, are indeed the terminus of light and the scenes of impenetrable darkness, and where, as declared in Job 28:7, 8, "There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen. The lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it." And these Confines all around the extremities of the Waters are the ones where, as in Psalm 147:16, 17, "He giveth snow like wool; He scattereth hoarfrost like ashes. He casteth forth His ice like morsels; who can stand before His cold?"

But another bound of these Seas finds reference in Inspiration, and in the connection of not again covering the Earth as at the beginning of the existing creation, and later when in the times of Noah the Flood waters were piled up all over the Earth over five miles. "For I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the Earth." (Isaiah 54 9). In the execution of this Divine oath and covenant of Gen. 9 8-17, the Almighty has fixed and maintained a "set bound." This latter is the subject of reference in Job 38: 8-11, Psalm 104: 8, 9: "Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the Earth." This "bound" has an important association with the rains from Heaven, with their ofttimes resulting floods in Rivers, and on the dry land, together with the vast supplies in the Seas poured down from above. But all this only replenishes the Seas and never permits them to rise above the appointed bound. In Eccles. 1 7, and the Septuagint Version, there is this explanation. "All the Rivers run into the Sea; and yet the Sea is not filled," that is, it does not overflow the dry land; it does not exceed the appointed bound. Not natural law but the Almighty directly manages in the observing and preserving of the appointed bound of the Seas. He not only set this, but watches and preserves it.

But all bounds fixed and observed in the quantities of waters would not realise the desired and promised end of keeping them in

the one place, if the fundamental "bound" of water was not provided for Solids such as soil, sand or stone can be placed on the steepest declination without fear of danger of motion, but water cannot. The inherent bound placed in water by Him Who made it was that it will only remain where it is put if the surface is level. Water, in small or large quantities, will run until it finds its level, and God made it thus to run. The "set bound" of the Seas when God first gathered them together into one place for the whole time of the existing creation was that of a perfectly level area. All over the immense Place where the Oceans flow is not only perfectly level, but is the accepted standard with mankind for measuring the various heights of land surfaces. "Sea level." This wonderful arrangement of the vast area of the Earth and its Oceans, of the absolute necessity of exactly the same level obtaining in every part, and of this being maintained to preserve the Earth from being overwhelmed, and to realise God's oath and covenant, is one of many causes for intelligent utterance of "Great and marvellous are Thy Works, Lord God Almighty."

The revealed presence of greater areas of water under the Earth than on its surface; of the whole Earth resting on these and of its Eternal foundations being below them, is another wonder of the Song of Moses. The first direct mention of these waters is in Exod. 20:4, and in the associations of the giving of the Law covenant to Israel, and the prohibiting with them of the worship of images of any creatures. The reference is profoundly suggestive in its intimations. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in Heaven above, or that is in the Earth beneath, or that is in the water under the Earth." The first intimation of these waters is that of Gen. 7:11, Gen. 8:2, and in the connection of the Flood. Together with the declared "opening of the windows of Heaven" in the phenomenal forty days' rains, there is the twice mention of the "foundations of the great deep" as being broken up, and later stopped when the appointed height of the Flood waters was reached. In this association of the contributory cause of the Flood from beneath the Earth, there is also an intimation of where the waters came from, as the destructive means of the first creation and its inhabitants. Moreover, the reference to "creatures in the waters under the Earth" becomes intelligible in this connection of the first creation, and its destroyed sinful Angels "cast down to Tartarus," as in 2nd Peter 2:4. This latter is the only use of "Tartarus" in the whole Scripture and to the death state of sinful Angels, and has the significance of the deepest state of Hades.

To Adam, and to all the dead of mankind, a "return to dust" is the state brought by death until the resurrection, as in Gen. 3:19: "Till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." In Isaiah 26:19, and concerning the restoration to life of Gentile peoples in the coming Age, there is this command: "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust." And in the same connection, Dan. 12:2 has the like definition of the human dead: "And many that sleep in the dust of the Earth shall awake." Not any of the dead of mankind are in the state of "the creatures in the waters under the Earth."

In the prophetic forecasts of the Universal adoration of Christ at the completion of the Divine Purpose in creation, there is the same mention as in Exod. 20 4 of the three domains of Heaven, Earth, and under the Earth. And in the final mention of these and the "creatures" in them, worshipping with confessing tongues and bended knees, is the matter of revelation, as in Philip 2 10, 11: "That in the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in Earth, and things under the Earth. And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" But in Rev. 5 13, and to remove any cause for confounding the waters under the Earth with the Seas on it, four domains are specified in the universal adoration. "And every creature which is in Heaven, and on the Earth, and under the Earth, and such as are in the Sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" From these testimonies it becomes manifest that the destructive waters on the first Earth, as in Gen. 1'2, were brought from beneath the Earth; that the mighty cataclysm associated with the "casting down" of sinful Angels rent the Earth into runs, and that with the "breaking of the fountains of the great deep," as at the later Flood, there was the carrying down beneath the Earth of the hosts of first transgressors.

The presence of the waters under the Earth and on which it rests is the theme of several Inspired testimonies by David, as elaborations of the Song of Moses. Two of these are presented in Psalm 24 1, 2, Psalm 136'6. "For He hath founded it upon the Seas, and established it upon the floods"

The wonderful arrangements for lighting the Earth, for dividing the day from the night, for forming days, weeks, months, years, in the times of the Earth, are recorded in Gen. 1: 14-19. The Divine work of the "fourth day" was that of making and "setting in the Firmament" three kinds of self-contained Luminaries of greatly different texture and volume of light. One, "the Greater Light," was for making the Day and the season of years, together with the four seasons of each year in all parts of the Earth. A "lesser great Light" was made to relieve the darkness without dispelling it, and for the formation of the seasons of weeks and months. With this latter, and as auxiliaries, hosts of smaller Lights of diversified sizes and volume of light were associated as night Lights. "O give thanks unto the Lord; to Him that made great Lights; the Sun to rule by day, the Moon and Stars to rule by night. Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the Sun for a Light by day, and the ordinances of the Moon and of the Stars for a light by night." (Psalm 136:1, 7-9; Jerem. 31:35).

In Gen. 1.16 it is recorded that "God made two great Lights," and in this first definition there is intimated that they were duplicates in size. Both were equally "great Lights" in this first regard of size, and were the only great lights. But in the second comparison in the same verse, and in the regard of their texture and volume of light, the one for the day was vastly greater than the other. "The greater Light to rule the day, and the lesser Light to rule the night."

Both were made Rulers as both were Lights. The approximate estimate of the volume of the light of the Sun being that of 613,000 times greater than that of the Moon, is but a recognition of the "greater and lesser" of Gen. 1.16, as it is of facts visible to all. In Psalm 19' 4-6 there is the definition of the appointed methods of lighting the Earth with the great ruler of the day, and which obtain also in the ordinances of the ruler of the night. "In them hath He set a tabernacle for the Sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of Heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it." A delightful study with learners of the Song of Moses is that of the "Circuits" of the Sun during the six months of each year in the respective centres of North and South of the celestial Equator, and the results of these in the two parts of the Earth North and South of the terrestrial Equator. The Sun's two Solstices and two Equinoxes, and his daily varying spirals in each centre from and to the Equator, are matters of wondering but intelligent interest to every singer of the New Song. And some of these latter have, by truly scientific methods and from evidences in the Divine Works, discovered that the exact sizes of the Sun and Moon—the two Great Lights—are those of thirty-two miles across, and that the Sun's position in the highest circuit of the three kinds of Lights is not more than three thousand miles distant from the surface of the Earth, with all the Stars below him in their circuits, and that of the Moon lower still.

The "ordinances of the Moon," as in Jerem. 31:35, her twice crossing of the celestial Equator every Month in contrast with the twice crossing of the Sun each year, her remarkable phases of "waxing and waning," and of later withdrawing her light altogether; of the cool and silvery nature of her light, and its volume being sufficient to relieve without utterly dispelling darkness, are some of the many wonders which call forth intelligent praise from those who have learnt the new Song. Unlike the Sun that shines with unclouded face, without phases, or withdrawing his light, the Moon has a luminous face comprehending half her orb, and the other half is clouded, veiled. Her nightly vibrations, "oscillations," permit for the first half of each month the turnings of her face in increasing fulness to the Earth and the withdrawal nightly of her light during the second fortnight until she becomes invisible. The circuit of the Sun, the great ruler of the day, is highest in the vault of the Firmamental Tent, and that of the associated ruler of the night is lowest or nearest to the level surface of the Earth. Between these two rulers, and as attendants of the Moon—auxiliary night lights, there are the hosts of Stars comprised in the two classes of "Wanderers and Fixed," all of which are, in the definitions of Inspiration, "Planets." If indeed we could know for certain the exact numbers of the generation of Israel entering Canaan under Joshua, we would then know the exact number of the Stars of Heaven, as indicated in Gen. 15:5, Deut. 1:3, 10, Nehem. 9:21-24.

When the exact sizes of the Sun and Moon are known, and the reliable appearances of the Stars to human sight are contrasted with the two great Lights, their diversified littleness increases the wonder

at their continuance and unfading light. For, as declared in Isaiah 40:26, not a Star made on the "fourth Day" has since ceased to shine, and the great cause of this with such small luminaries is explained as follows. "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold Who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number; He calleth them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power not one faileth." The appointed "circuits" of these auxiliary night lights are with the "Wanderers," both North and South of the Celestial Equator. But, with the fixed Stars there is a remarkable difference both with the "Wanderers" and with those in North and South. Since the North centre of the Heavens is directly over the centre of the Earth, and the South corresponds with the circular boundaries of the Earth, the respective circuits of the "Fixed Stars" in North and South vary greatly in the area of their respective orbits. Those in the North circle round an orbit with the North Polar Star as centre. But so extensive is the orbit of the Southern Stars that these are visible in such widely-separated parts as New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, etc.

Not a Star in the vault of the Firmament but has its appointed circuit and service in "lighting the Earth." And as these hosts of Stars, together with the two great Lights and Rulers, are swept around their appointed circuits at different heights in the Firmament by the mighty currents of electrical magnetic Ether, there is produced that which Poetry refers to as "The music of the spheres." This same matter finds reference in the following quotation from Sir William Peck's work, "Constellations, and how to find them." And as these motions and uproars cannot take place without a great noise, there must be incessantly produced a noise compared to which the loudest crash of thunder will be as absolute silence. So that in the awful stillness of the Star depths there is going on continually a fearful tumult and uproar, compared to which the greatest noise that we can realise sinks into complete nothingness. But in Psalm 148:3, and in the same connection of the "Noise" in the vault of the Firmament made by the three kinds of Lights in their ceaseless motions, a much more correct definition is given. "Praise ye Him, Sun and Moon; praise Him, all ye Stars of light." And intelligent praise is daily ascending on the same account of these great and marvellous works, from all singers of the New Song on the Earth, and with those getting Ready for the Bridegroom.

The appointed terminus of the shining of all the Stars is to be reached during Christ's third Revelation on the clouds of Heaven, at the end of the coming Harvest, as forecasted in Matt. 24:29, and by Christ Himself: "The Stars shall fall from Heaven." This "falling" must be to the Earth since its surface is the only area enclosed by the Firmament, and is the same in extent as that of the "Star depths" in the vault above. In the same reference, and during the same Revelation, there is mention of the two other "great Lights" by their names of Powers or Rulers. "And the Powers of Heaven shall be shaken." That this shaking has connection with alterations in these Powers, and not, like as with the Stars—their extinguishing and removal, is confirmed by connected Scriptures, as it is required by the Divine purpose on Earth at that Era. But a better under-

standing of Matt 24 29, and its forecasted shaking of the Powers of Heaven during the third Revelation of Christ, is brought by recognition of the one universal shaking of all parts of the existing creation, during the two previous Revelations of Christ on the clouds of Heaven, and to the rebellious of living mankind. This one shaking and its associations finds reference in the following Prophecies: Haggai 2:6, 7, Heb 12:25-27, Joel 2 10, 11, Joel 3 15, 16 "For thus saith the Lord of Hosts Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the Heavens, and the Earth, and the Sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come." Only this once during the history of the present Heaven and Earth is there any motion or moving of the whole creation. All previous motion was limited to that of the Lights of Heaven, and such motion on the surface of the Earth as that of Oceans, Rivers, and Volcanic eruptions with earthquakes.

When this once shaking and its times are recognised, then the additional and particular one of the Powers of Heaven outlined in Matt 24 29 makes intelligent appeal, and prepares the mind for further explanation. The removal of all the Stars leaves only the two Great Lights to shine for the course of the Millennial Age. This is in agreement with all references in the same connection in Prophecy, such as Isaiah 24:13, Isaiah 60 20. But, and in accord with the wonderful changes and order of Messiah's Kingdom, increased light is to obtain for the days and nights of the glorious thousand years, and as a prelude to the uncreated light of the succeeding New Heavens and Earth. Without any corresponding increase of heat the light of the Sun is to be increased sevenfold—however difficult of apprehension this may now be. And in not specifying what increase of the light of the Moon would be possible, without interference with the fact and necessity of night, there is in Isaiah 30:26 an associated reference to the light of the Moon. "Moreover, the light of the Moon shall be as the light of the Sun, and the light of the Sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of His people, and healeth the stroke of their wound." In this prophecy only the light of the Sun is specified as being greatly increased, and that the Moon, like the Sun, is to shine with unclouded face, and without any of her previous phases of waxing and waning. Every night for the last thousand years of the existing creation a full Moon will shine on the restored Earth, and for the benefit and pleasure of its privileged inhabitants. Such structural changes as will be required with both Sun and Moon for the rendering of the new forms of service will be accomplished during the Revelation of Matt. 24:29, and by the "shaking of the Powers of Heaven." At the ending of that Age, and the full accomplishment of the Divine purpose in it, "Heaven and Earth will pass away," as declared by Christ in Matt. 24:35. The mighty Lake of fire, which is also the Second Death, will consume the Firmament and its two great Lights, with the surface of the Earth prepared for and the scene of human history. The consumption of this "upper crust" will bring to view the wonderful surface of the third and Eternal Earth, and which has been in course of preparation by refining fires for the whole course of the existing

creation (2nd Peter 3 7-13, Rev 20:11, Rev. 21:1). "And I saw a new Heaven and a new Earth, for the first Heaven and the first Earth were passed away, and there was no more Sea."

Only the singers on the glassy Sea, of all generations, praising God for instructed understanding of His "great and marvellous Works," have fully recognised the inseparable connection of these with the times and experiences of human life in a flesh and blood nature. Also that the perfect State designed and promised by God cannot come until the existing creation has run its course and passed away. The Eternal State is to be a "New Creation" succeeding the present temporary one, with a New Earth and the Home of the Almighty as its Eternal Heaven. And, indeed, the Works of God which have been but briefly and imperfectly identified in our tracings are only some of the many comprising the substance of the Song of Moses, as of the material creation made during the Six Days of the creative Week. And these others have their important places too in the constituents of the New Song. The works of the Fifth and Sixth Days were great and marvellous, since they comprised the making of the living kingdoms of irrational creatures to share the Earth with man, and the bringing unto life of the first human being as the founder of the great human race. Modern additions to the "scoffing of the last days," such as the theory of Evolution, both of the material Universe and of its living kingdoms, have made faith in the Mosaic account of the origin of living creatures to be rare even in religious associations. And that which seemed almost superfluous in the Genesis account of the bringing of each living kingdom has become manifest as absolutely necessary. "After their kind; after his kind," finds reiteration in the detailed particulars of the bringing into being of the diverse kingdoms of creatures.

The creation of man was the last of the great and marvellous works, as it was an ultimate of the whole. The ultimate is that of Rev. 4:11, and is recognised by all singing the New Song. "For Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are, and were, created." And this pleasure is not realised in the present temporary creation, nor in the experiences inseparably connected with its history. Like as with the death and raising of Lazarus, the glory of God was shown in the latter, and not in the former, so with the "ultimate" of the Divine Works. The pleasure of God will be realised when pleasures for evermore are the portion of mankind. The humble origin of the first man; made of dust; the fact of his mortal personality which is stressed in such Scriptures as 1st Cor. 15:53, 54; of man being made a little lower than the Angels, as in Psalm 8-5, all disclose that the designed purpose of the present life with man as a race, is that of a preliminary one for severe training. Man, "as fearfully and wonderfully made" by God, and his place in the existing creation as delineated in the account of creation in Genesis, forms a prominent part of the substance of the new Song. The singers of this, standing on the glassy Sea, have gotten the victory over all false theories of human immortality, and in their address to the Almighty concerning His Works have the same estimate of themselves as that recorded of Abraham in Gen. 18:27: "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes."

VIII.

“JUST AND TRUE ARE THY WAYS.”

It has been the privilege of the writer of this Work, and in a previous one—“Creation and its Sequel”—to seek to present an exposition of the whole Divine Purpose from Eternity to Eternity, and thus join in the new Song of the Lamb. The reader is referred to this previous Work and its presentation of the “just and true ways” of Jehovah for matters not elaborated in this Work.

The saying, “Just and true are Thy ways,” in Rev. 15.3, is the first expression of the “Song of the Lamb,” although it is the second portion of the combined or two-phased New Song. There must have been a creation made before it could be the domain of history, or of the redemption of its rational subjects. Thus, an instructed recognition of the great and marvellous works of the creation of God is the first matter of intelligent praise, although not first in importance. But no opposing theories of the Divine Works to the account through Moses and the Prophets could be offered in praise to Him, or be accepted by Him as part of the New Song. And just as the substance of the Song of Moses is presented in the words, “Great and marvellous are Thy Works, Lord God Almighty,” so that of the Song of the Lamb finds expression in the words of the same verse, “Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of Nations.” Only in regard to Works, and not to ways or acts, are the adjectives “Great and Marvellous” appropriate, and the designation of the Divine Being as the Almighty or Creator the same. So with the Ways of God being just and true, and that He is in this connection of these Ways the King of Nations. Assuredly, all Nations have been subjects of the Ways of this Great King right through their lives and in death. David’s words in Psalm 139: 7-12 are true in the experience of every mortal: “Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into Heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold Thou art there.” The marginal reading in the common Version of Rev. 15:3, last clause, “King of Nations” is manifestly correct, and not that of “Saints,” since All Nations are the subjects of His Ways, referred to in verse 4, and not saints only.

The last clause of verse 3, and the whole of verse 4, are the substance of the Song of the Lamb, and quite different to that of the Song of Moses. But if the latter is melody from the Harp of God, as indeed it is, then how much sweeter is the Song of the Lamb? This Song comprises matters of instructed, intelligent, and confessed belief in the Divine purposes realised through God’s provision of His Son as His Lamb. Delighted praise to God for these wonderful Ways is the daily attitude of these singers, for each day brings new and increased understanding of the universal purpose of Eternal Wisdom, Justice, Power, and Love. These Immortal attributes of the Eternal God which are signified in the Apocalypse by the “Four

Living Creatures full of Eyes," have all co-operated with each other in the matters confessed and defined in the condensed and pregnant words of the Song of the Lamb. What entrancing melody there is in the first and basic terms, "Just and True are Thy Ways," and which become an Anthem of Heavenly Music in the elaboration of these ways with all nations.

And again we must observe the altogether exceptional character of this matter of melodious praise, and in a connection not previously commented on. The prevailing order of Divine Revelation is that of presenting materials for the enlightened faith and obedience of all that are anxious and willing to become the children of God. The Prophetic matters of Inspiration combine with the moral and spiritual in this connection. But the beautiful matter of Rev. 15: 2-4, in conjunction with, and an elaboration of Rev. 14: 3-5, is not only a Prophetic forecast of the last community of Christ's people, but also of the materials of their enlightened and confessed beliefs in the sweet story of redeeming Love. And in this, as in the substance of the Song of Moses, the melody is that of the Harp of God, and manifests how all thus praising God have "gotten the victory" over opposing and universally prevalent false beliefs concerning the Divine purpose in the Lamb. But all these singers are themselves lost—as it were—in the entrancing theme of their praise. They recognise themselves as constituents of the "all nations" that are the privileged subjects of His just and true ways, that they share with all others the illimitable grace of God. All these know that all merit is with the Lamb, and that all praise for devising and realising a reconciled Universe belongs to Him Whom they adore.

Jehovah's just and true ways with His creatures, and during the history of the first, as of the second and existing creation, are those based upon His own previously-determined purpose in His Son the Lamb. If there had not been the "Lamb" there would not have been any created universe. Any right conception of the just and true ways of God in creation, and its after-results, must be based on the Lamb. As revealed in many Scriptures, the first thought in the mind of the Infinite, when contemplating a created Universe, was the fact of sin and necessity for Atonement and Redemption. God could not create a Universe such as He desired and required without sin entering in. And Divine justice could not spare sinners from death or from returning to their previous state of non-existence. With these foreknown results of Creation in His mind, the first creative work before any later one was possible was that of a Son, the "firstborn of Creation; the Beginning of the creation of God," as in Coloss. 1:15, Rev. 3:14. When this Son proved His ability, and manifested His enthusiastic willingness to accomplish the putting away of all sin entering the "creation of God," the Father accomplished the bringing of a material Universe in the designed order of a first and second Heaven and Earth. Sin commenced with considerable but unrevealed numbers of the spiritual inhabitants of the first creation, but all the inhabitants of the second—the human race—have sinned "and came short of the glory of God." And in this fundamental regard the truthful declaration of Rom. 3:22 is intended as inculcating

becoming humility in all sinful if believing mortals. "For there is no difference."

The material Universe, with all its rational creatures, was the first expression of "The Eternal purpose, which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord," as in Ephes. 3:11. The several references to the One Creator, the One Almighty, are not in conflict with others which properly associate the Son and Lamb as the one great Cause of all creation. Jehovah's just and true ways are all governed by His purposes in the Lamb. In these same Ways, and after consultation with the Son, the Lamb was slain in the counsels of God in times Eternal and before the creation of the Universe. Jehovah foreknew what the total of all sin would be, and that the later sacrifice of His Son and Lamb in the human nature could, and would, both expiate it, and deliver all sinners into Eternal Life. So just and true were His ways that when the "due time" came for Christ to die a violent and degraded death for the ungodly, for sinners, and for all sin, "He spared not His Own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." And this was the expression of the covenanted agreement between Father and Son made in Times Eternal. Since Redemption was the basis of creation, then every rational creature is indebted to the Lamb for present existence, as all these are for a resurrection and Eternal Life in a spiritual nature with the diverse glories specified in 1st Cor. 15: 40-42 of Celestial and Terrestrial. The just and true ways of the King of Nations are shown in the loaning of life, and being to mankind in the flesh, and during the times of the existing creation, and the reservation of the right to withdraw the spirit or essence of life from all as He approves. In this connection God has appointed limits to the duration of human life, which have varied in different dispensations.

"What man is he that liveth and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?" is the pertinent query of Psalm 89:48. The first man Adam was the only one of the human race with opportunity of living forever without death, and by abstinence from sin. (The Victors on the glassy Sea of Rev. 15: 2-4 are the first to enter Eternal Life without death, but are all redeemed sinners.) Adam's loss of life was the only one of all mankind that resulted from individual transgression; all others have died as a consequence of Adam's one sin, although all others have also sinned. "As in Adam, all die. As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men. For by one man's offence, death reigned by one. As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation." These testimonies in 1st Cor. 15: 21, 22, Rom. 5: 12, 17, 18 not only confirm the truth of a loaned life with the certainty of death to all mankind at Divinely-appointed times, but present the one cause of universal death. And all this is the expression of His "just and true ways" with redeemed sinners through the Lamb. Just as all present life is but loaned for a few years at most with the certainty of death, so resurrection Life—through the Lamb, is not only Eternal Life to all its redeemed subjects of both orders of resurrection, but is the "Gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 5:18, Rom. 6:23).

The necessity for the present loaned life and all its experiences with every human sinner, that was recognised by Jehovah when forming His counsel in Eternity, has been made manifest to the singers of the new Song before they could see that His ways with all Nations are just and true. The universal condemnation of all men to death on account of the sin of one cannot be seen as just save as the Song of the Lamb is learnt. The laying on the Lamb of all human sin and iniquity, which includes in its many and diversified matters that of unbelief, is another cause of melodious praise inspired by the Harp of God with these singers. All these have learnt that during present dispensations, and in the provision of the "Great Salvation," instructed faith in the Word of the Father and Son is the means of receiving the promised gift of the Heavenly Inheritance, the Celestial glory, purchased by the Lamb. "But without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6). It is only concerning the Great Salvation, the Kingdom of Heaven, and participation in the promised "Celestial Glory," that the gift of Eternal Life through the Lamb is referred to as in any way a "reward," a gift reward. In the same connection all references to loss or judgments on unbelief and disobedience have the association of the present offer of the Great Salvation, and not that of redemption by the Lamb, or of participation in resurrection to Eternal Life and the Terrestrial glory.

A fundamental truth of the "just and true ways" of God is that He did not foreordain either sin or sinful history. He foreknew every sin and sinner, and by this perfect knowledge was able to foreordain all His purpose of the Redemption of all sinners by the work of the Lamb. This fundamental difference between the foreknowledge and foreordination of God is marked in all references in Inspiration. God did not foreordain that any would believe His Word and seek to obey it, nor that others would be unbelieving and disobedient during the course of the existing creation. But He foreknew both classes. Some Scriptures, in outlining how God has not interfered with the course of His creatures, and that all mankind have followed their own ways, powerfully reveal the difference between the Divine Foreknowledge and foreordination. Walking in their own ways and not in His finds frequent mention concerning all men. "They are all gone out of the way. Destruction and misery are in their ways. And the way of peace have they not known. Who in times past suffered all Nations to walk in their own ways." These testimonies in Rom. 3: 12, 16, 17; Acts 14, 16, with many others, reveal the knowledge but not the ordination of God in the sinful ways of mankind. In Isai. 53: 6 there is beautifully displayed the different operations of the Divine knowledge and ordination. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." God foreknew that every one of mankind would go astray and turn to his own way, but He did not foreordain this. But He foreordained the laying of all human iniquity on the Lamb, and not only foreknew that He would do this.

The same obtains with His "just and true ways" with all sinners who become believers in His Word during present dispensations. All these were "foreknown" by Him in times Eternal, but not **fore-ordained**. And all these were, as declared in Rom. 8: 29, Ephes. 1: 5, 11, 12, "**predestinated**" or marked off in His counsels to receive opportunity for obtaining by faith a place in an exceptional salvation "That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ." This privilege of hearing the Gospel which contains the offer of the "Great Salvation" has, in His just and true ways, been afforded those of mankind able if willing to accept it. And this privileged offer is also referred to as an "**election of grace**," as in Rom. 11: 5, 7 To be Elect signifies to be Chosen, but not by Divine ordination or appointment, although of His foreknowledge. In 2nd Peter 1: 10 there is indicated how proper use of hearing and believing must result before election or chosen become possible. "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fail."

But the only connection of all these references to "foreknowledge, predestination and election" is that of the exceptional offer of the "Great Salvation or Kingdom of Heaven," during the present dispensation. As we have noted all sinners were foreknown by God and all their sins, and not only believing sinners and their faith. And this also obtains in the great sequel brought by the universal redemption through the Lamb. Those who were not "**predestinated**" or marked off in the Divine counsels to hear the great salvation during the present Age; who were not of the present "**election of grace**," are just as much the subjects of Redemption as those who are. Moreover, the very matter of marking off or predestinating some to hear the Gospel of His grace, discloses another **marking off** with all others excluded from present enlightenment. And all that are not predestinated to hear and believe the great salvation, although they are foreknown by God, are **predestinated** to enter Eternal Life and an Election in it with an appointed glory. And this latter is also indicated in such definitions of the present election of grace as Ephes. 1: 12: "That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ." This leaves for other Scriptures to define what is reserved for all others of the redeemed race, who will later "**trust in Christ**." These latter, as prophesied in Philip. 2: 10, 11, not only include the whole human race, but all in the Angelic nature, or, as in Ephes. 1: 10 and Coloss. 1: 20, "to gather together all things in Christ, through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself."

This matter of the foreknowledge of God with all rational creatures and their respective courses of faith or unbelief during the present life has its final in the arrangements from Times Eternal of the two great glories of the Eternal New Creation. In these provisions through the Lamb and by the Divine **foreordination** all redeemed creatures were provided for. But the sharers of the respective **Glories** were foreknown and not foreordained. These two Eternal Glories are revealed and defined in 1st Cor. 15: 40-42, and in the associations of expounding the resurrection of all the dead. "There are also Celestial bodies and bodies Terrestrial; but the glory of the

Celestial is one, and the glory of the Terrestrial is another." Every rational creature of God redeemed by His just and true ways with the Lamb will inherit one of these two glories in Eternal Life, both of which, as stated in verse 44, are those of the Spiritual nature. "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a Spiritual body," has application to both Celestial and Terrestrial bodies.

Since the Son of God was the only one with the Father, when the designed purpose of a Created Universe was settled by His ready willingness to become the Lamb, then all connected with His earthly life and death, as of His resurrection and Kingdom, were matters of Divine foreordination. The previous life with the Father and consultation and co-operation in His counsels, fully explain such references as Acts 2: 23; 1st Peter 1: 18-20, and where "foreordained" is employed instead of—as with all others on Earth—**foreknown**, Christ Himself foreknew all that His earthly life contained of the Father's will, and had previously consented to "humble Himself" to human flesh and all its necessary experiences for the reconciling of all things to God. Jehovah's ways were just and true with the Lamb and all His foreordained sufferings. He came to do the Father's will and not—as with all others—His own will or walk His own way. Again and again it is recorded of Christ's experiences and works, commencing with His birth at Bethlehem, "That it might be fulfilled." That which had been both foreknown and foreordained of the Lamb in Times Eternal, was placed in the Harp of God, in Prophecy, and made living music in the Redeemer's life. In Luke 24: 26, 27, and the account of Christ's converse with two disciples on the day of His resurrection, there is this utterance of the Lamb: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory. And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." These "things" which were all in the future when first designed and covenanted between Father and Son; which were embodied in the Word of Prophecy thousands of years before they were due for fulfilment when the Word was made flesh, were all accomplished verities when Christ rose from the dead. And the inclusion in the New Testament of the realised matters of Divine foreordination with the Lamb, which had been also prophesied in the Prophets, makes the Divine Word in its two Testaments a double witness to His just and true ways. And these same foreordained experiences of the Lamb, from His entrance into the world of human affairs and birth in a "bondsman's form of flesh," to His glorious and isolated resurrection from the dead, are the matters which make the Divine Word the Harp of God. To every learner of the entrancing Song of the Lamb from this Divine Harp, and in the several connections we have considered, an intense and intelligent thrill is brought in the first stanza of praise: "Just and true are Thy Ways, Thou King of Nations."

"Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy Name? for Thou only art holy," is the second matter of this Song in Rev. 15: 4, and now being sung all over the Earth by those with the standing shown in the "Glassy Sea" signified to John's sight, Thus singing

when it commences never ceases until the singers meet the Lamb, and join with all their fellow glorified ones from all previous generations in the victorious song of Rev. 7. 9, 10. It is this feature of continuity which is responsible for the use of the present tense in Rev. 15. 3: "And they sing the Song." The matter of verse 4, first clause, is an expression of the inevitable outcome of any learning of Jehovah's just and true ways. Such learning effectively removes all humanly imposed hindrances of universal approach to and glorification of the great King of Nations. "Who shall not fear Thee," not only manifests recognition of the absence of all hindrances in this connection, but in its future tense and not the present tense is all the more striking, as it is truthful and beautiful. All these singers know that few now or in any past times have feared or revered Him or sought to glorify His Name. But, by learning the Song of the Lamb and of Jehovah's just and true ways, they have "gotten the victory" over all false theories of human redemption, and of death bringing any eternal separation of redeemed sinners from the One That redeemed them. No authority from Heaven ever conferred upon sinful or believing mortals the right to tell their unbelieving fellows, that death would bring an eternal separation from the God Who made and loved them and the Lamb Who gave Himself for them. But to be able to repudiate such false teaching, and to be enlightened by the thrilling story of redeeming love and its provision for all, is only possible by becoming harpers "having the Harps of God." The groaning of the human creation and travelling in pain, referred to in Rom. 8. 22, not only has an end but a glorious universal sequel of deliverance.

"Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy Name? for Thou alone art Holy," reveals further and in its last terms a new but manifestly necessary feature, of the "victory" over false religious theories obtained by the singers. Religious pride is the worst of all and religious hatred the most bitter. The Nation of Israel was an object lesson for the Gentiles to avoid in this connection of approach to God. Israel resented any rights of Gentiles to Divine fellowship and favors, and boasted in her presumed isolated standing before God. "Behold thou art called a Jew, and retest in the Law, and makest thy boast of God." (Rom. 2. 17). The matter of Isaiah 65: 3-5, and concerning Israel, has had an intensified fulfillment during the Gospel Age with Gentiles professing the Name and service of Christ. With these latter nothing better than a Hell of eternal torture was believed to be awaiting those outside of the many self-claimed true Churches. Some modern sects have modified this to signify that all unbelievers will at death, or after future judgment, pass out of existence. So meritorious is the act of believing regarded by these, that Eternal Life is declared by them as either obtainable or forfeited by the faith or unbelief of sinners. And this results in the dividing of mankind into two different classes with different Eternal destinies, and the formation of religious pride in all those regarding themselves as the only people of God. The matter of Isaiah 65: 3-5 has powerful significance in the connection of sinful religious pride.

A people that provoketh Me to anger continually to My face. Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou, These are a smoke in My anger, a fire that burneth all day."

It is on account of altogether false ideas of the Divine Word, and of the Divine character, that these humanly imposed divisions between just and unjust, believers and unbelievers, are made by the religious world. All distinctions in this connection in the Scriptures have no application to Redemption or Eternal Life, but only to the present Great Salvation, as in Heb. 2 3 "How shall we escape if we neglect so great Salvation?" And other Scriptures reveal that this "escaping," as well as the references to "perishing," have application to living and reigning with Christ during the coming Age, or remaining in the state of death for that Age. The matter of Redemption and Eternal Life through the Lamb has no connection with human faith or unbelief, and in regard to these Jehovah has not placed any barriers to approaching Him, to fearing Him and glorifying His Name. The fact of death with all generations of unbelievers does not interpose any obstacle to this later universal reverencing Him, and is in no way instituted or intended by Jehovah as marking any Eternal separation from Him.

These matters of newly-discovered truth from the Divine Word are responsible for the exultant praise of this first matter of Rev. 15:4: "Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy Name? for Thou only art holy." The challenging tone of the first clause is parallel with the same in Rom 8. 33-38. "Who is he that condemneth? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" None can condemn or separate from this love those embraced in it; and none are to be debarred from fearing and glorifying Him. The only One that could refuse any in this connection would be Jehovah Himself. And here is the tremendous force of the words, "For Thou only art holy." It is because He only is Holy that none will be debarred from approach to Him. Not only is Jehovah Personally Holy, and the source of holiness to others, but in this matter of unhindered, unlimited approach, of His redeemed creatures He is wholly kind and gracious. The Greek term rendered "Holy" in this reference has the significance of "kind, gracious, bountiful." These instructed worshippers know, and confess to Him, that He is only and wholly kind, gracious, bountiful, and not vindictive, not unforgiving, not cruel nor hard. To thus praise Him manifests "victory" over the false belief that God could be both loving to some of His creatures and cruel to others, or that His love and justice have directly opposite manifestations with different classes of His creatures. "For Thou only art Holy."

The use of the auxiliary verb "Shall not," with its future significance, in the exultant and self-answered question of this verse, manifests the enthusiasm and certainty of these worshippers. "Who shall not fear Thee" is the confident praise resulting from the same confident knowledge of Jehovah's character. But in the succeeding clause of Rev. 15 4, this same verb, with its future setting, is employed in an emphatic affirmation of what shall be. "For all nations shall come and worship before Thee." This is but the completion of

the previous matter. "Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord," has its full explanation in the later words, "for all Nations shall come and worship before Thee." In both, the future and not past or present is indicated. So enthusiastic are these singers of the New Song that this matter of all Nations coming and worshipping God is twice mentioned in their praise in different connections. Unlike those misled by the false human theories of future punishment to all "un-believers," and regarded as necessary manifestations of Divine justice, all these worshippers are thrilled with delight at the known consummation of universal worship. They know, too, that the coming of all Nations from death to life will result in all these worshipping before Him, although the great majority of them have been, during their earthly lives, unbelieving and disobedient. So wonderful are His Ways through the Lamb that no compulsion is required with any of these Nations when they all come again, in the matter of worship. "For all Nations shall come and worship before Thee," is not only wonderfully true, but the matter of enlightened praise presented to God by these singers of the Song of the Lamb.

Exactly the same matter concerning all Nations is comprised in the prophecy of Psalm 86:9, 10. "All Nations whom Thou hast made, shall come and worship before Thee, O Lord; and shall glorify Thy Name." This Prophecy given to and through David has been written in the Divine Word for nearly three thousand years, and no possible doubt as to its unlimited declarations could ever arise in the mind of any reader. But like the many other constituents of the Song of the Lamb in the Prophets and in the New Testament, its absolute truthfulness can only be recognised and confessed by those who have learnt the delightful story of redemption through the Lamb. With all others the Prophecy is subjected to such pruning down as is required to conform with the religious theories of the critics. But what a remarkable difference there is in the associations of the same matter of Inspiration in Psalm 86: 9, 10, and in Rev. 15:4! The former was a Prophecy of a consummation which is still over a thousand years distant, although written nearly three thousand years ago. The latter is first the substance of a beautiful sign given to the Apostle John when he was on Patmos over eighteen centuries ago. And second, this same sign was designed to present the last community of Christ's people of the Gospel Age, confessing their faith before God, and which "faith" includes belief in and understanding of the prophesied coming of all Nations to worship before God at the consummation.

This confessed praise derived from the Harp of God is so precious to Him as to have the exceptional record of it and of its substance in the two sections of Rev. 14: 3-5 and Rev. 15: 2, 4. This is altogether exceptional and without parallel with any other generation of believers and their rendering of the Song of the Lamb. If any of these others had thus praised Him, there would have been no necessity for this detailed forecast in these two sections of the standing and beliefs of the last Virgins. Jehovah loves all the Nations whom He made; loves every individual in them with an everlasting love and never forgets His own promises concerning the same written in His

Word, and formed in His counsel in Times Eternal. Although individuals in previous generations—like the Apostle Paul—have understood and confessed these matters of the universal love of Jehovah, this last community of Virgins is the first to unite with one mouth and one New Song in praise to God, on account of His loving purpose with all Nations. In this they have truly learnt of Him and caught from Him and through His melodious Harp that glorious spirit which is the pledge of sonship, and which will yet pervade all things when “God is all in all.” “For all Nations shall come and worship before Thee.”

And this confessed praise derived from His Harp, and not from any speculations of their own or of their fellows, can only be intelligently held and confessed to Him and before men, as there is also instructed understanding concerning the several “Ways of life” along which all Nations are to come. It is not possible to fit in with any human Plan of the future this diverse bringing of all Nations into Eternal Life, and to Worship before Jehovah. Hence, none can intelligently join in this feature of the New Song until they have learnt His Plan, and of His several Ways of Life. These wonderful Ways of life were, of necessity, first made known to the Lamb by the Father in Times Eternal, and later incorporated in His Word as parts of the sweetest of all stories, that of Redemption. When Peter was used to first open the Kingdom of Heaven at Pentecost to believing Israel, he quoted from the Prophets and concerning Christ, in regard to these Ways of Life, in Acts 2: 28: “Thou hast made known to Me the Ways of Life; Thou shalt make Me full of joy with Thy countenance.” Only to the Lamb were these “made known” previously, and He Himself is the One personal Way to the Father and to Eternal Life, as declared by Himself and in the words of John 14: 6: “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.”

And when all Nations come and worship before Jehovah it will be by the receiving of resurrection life from Christ, and His removal from all of them of every trace of the disposition of sin. Jehovah's just and true ways have provided for this future universal deliverance from the dominion of a sinful nature by the Lamb—the last Adam. This is but the purposed sequel to the universal imposing on mankind of the disposition of disobedience as the result of the sin of the first man Adam, as in Rom. 5: 19: “For as by one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall the many be made righteous.” It is only by the obedience of One that any can be made righteous in the Divine sight, and not by such limited obedience as sinners can render. This future full deliverance of all from the imposed state on all from the one sin of the first sinner, alone justifies the Divine ways and is not any interference with human will or choice. These latter were not consulted in the imposing of a sinful state from the first man, nor are they in the complete removal of this. And the revealed truth of all Nations worshipping Him and glorifying His Name, when they are made righteous through the obedience of One, manifests the delightful results of present life training with all.

Never again for all Eternity will sin enter the Divine Creation or dominate any of His creatures.

The several "Ways of life" by which all Nations are to enter Life Eternal, made known first to the Lamb and by Him made certain of realisation, are also the matters of intelligent faith and praise by the singers of the New Song. Nation is a designation used by Christ, and in Matt. 21: 43, of all the believing constituents of the "Kingdom of Heaven" or the Divine cause of the Gospel Age. "The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you (Israel) and given to a Nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." This Nation is altogether exceptional in comprising only Kings and Priests, and has first mention in the conditional promise to Israel at Sinai and recorded in Exod. 19: 5, 6: "If ye will obey My Voice indeed. . . And ye shall be unto Me a Kingdom of Priests, and an holy Nation." In 1st Peter 2: 9 both designations are used with others in application to the one community of Christ's people; "A Royal Priesthood; an holy Nation." All comprised in this Nation are to enter Eternal Life at Christ's descent, in the First Resurrection, and with that glory of the Celestial which is compared in 1st Cor. 15: 40, 41 with the glory of the Sun.

Another Nation comprising all the justified by faith of the dispensations from Adam to the first Advent of Christ, has also a part in the First Resurrection and an inheritance of a Celestial glory compared with that of the Moon. The First Resurrection has two parts; and the Celestial inheritance for those comprised in these has the two Glories. This second part of the First Resurrection is separated in its times from the First, by the periods of the Time of Jacob's trouble and the greater portion of the succeeding Harvest, or approximately forty years. Just as all comprised in the First part are Kings and Priests unto God, so all of the second part and Nation are Princes, as indicated in Psalm 45; 16, and connected Scriptures. "Instead of Thy fathers shall be Thy children, whom Thou mayest make Princes in all the Earth." These two Nations of Kings and Princes are the first to "come and worship before Him and to glorify His Name," and are the evidences of abounding Grace with the believing section of mankind. All these have been made righteous solely through the obedience of One, and brought to the two phases of the Celestial glory only through the merits of the Lamb. Their faith has been the means of this Celestial glory being given them on His account and by His purchase.

Not until the ending of the thousand years Kingdom of Messiah is there opened the second Way into Eternal Life, and the accomplishment of the first portion of the Second Resurrection. This latter, like the First, has two parts, but its Glories of the Terrestrial, which are compared in 1st Cor. 15: 40, 41 with the Stars, has as many diversities as they have. Many Nations of obedient Gentiles with the constituents of the mighty and humble Nation of Israel, "Come and worship before Him" in Eternal Life by this second Way of life, opened in its first part at the terminus of the Millennial Age and Kingdom. And all these living Nations,

comprising an immense but unrevealed totality of individuals, are to enter Life Eternal without death. These comprise a Harvest of the Millennial Age, to which the 144,000 Virgins—the last company of the Gospel Church, are a “Firstfruits” in their entrance into Eternal Life without death, as declared in Rev. 14: 4. These two companies of the two dispensations and of greatly different dimensions or numbers, are the only ones to share Resurrection apart from death and the grave.

The consumption of the existing creation of Heaven and Earth in the unthinkable vast Lake of Fire, the Second death, is to be accomplished before the final Way of life is opened to the last sinners in the death state. These must be immense in numbers, since they embrace all of the human race not restored in the coming Age and the dead of that Age, with the dead of the first creation and in the Angelic nature. The length of time occupied in the consuming of the existing creation in the Lake of fire is not revealed. But with its ending and the immediately succeeding appearance of the New Earth there is also that of the Nations coming from death to worship Him and to glorify His Name. These last of the redeemed ones by the Lamb comprise two great Nations. The previous dead in the Angelic nature and of the first creation are one Nation; the many of mankind brought from death, Hades and the Sea, as in Rev. 20: 13, comprise the other Nation. It is concerning these two Nations—the last to enter Eternal Life—that the several beautiful references in Rev. 21: 3, 4, 24-27 have particular application. With the bringing and training of these Nations the work of the Lamb in redeeming and reconciling all things is accomplished.

Wonderful indeed are these “Ways of life” along which the Lamb brings all Nations into Eternal Life and to worship before His Father and glorify His Name. And indeed it is a victory to learn of these Ways and to daily join in the Song of the Lamb in praising God for them and their consummation.

“For all Nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest,” is the last stanza of the Song in Rev. 15: 4. The use of the present tense in this last clause and the future one in the preceding clause is an important key to understanding what is meant. The declared coming of all Nations to worship is in the future tense, “shall come.” But the making manifest of His judgments is not delayed; these are now manifest to the ones praising Him in this Song. It is because His judgments are manifest to these worshippers that they are thus enabled to praise Him for the certain future coming and worship before Him of All Nations. If these judgments were not manifest then it would not be possible to sing the New Song of the Lamb. The Divine judgments recorded in His Word, of past, present and future times, are insuperable obstacles with all others of mankind to learning this portion of the New Song. Of all the living these singers are the only ones to whom His judgments are made manifest, and this from the Harp of God. The glorious melody brought from the Harp into this part of the New Song is that all judgments on all sinners are necessary means to an end, but not the end itself. Since all judgments have the terminus of death, and that death comes

to all as the wages of sin and the end of present existence, then all judgments end at the glorious Resurrection of each Nation. Judgment is not the end with any sinners redeemed by the Lamb; the end is Eternal Life through the Lamb.

In Psalm 36: 6 there is the truthful declaration that "Thy judgments are a great deep," and in Rom. 11: 33 of "How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out" Apart from the unsealing of His Word promised during the "Time of the End," that the wise shall understand, it would be utterly impossible for any mortals to sing the New Song and to say truthfully to Jehovah, "Thy judgments are made manifest." And Jehovah would never have included in the Testament of His Son the forecast of Rev 15: 2-4, and of the last company of Virgins and their New Song, if every feature of their praise was not true and inspired by His glorious Harp. It is no small evidence of "Had gotten the victory" with these worshippers that they can truthfully and enthusiastically praise Him on account of His judgments being made manifest. There is no making light of sin in the Divine Word, nor apology for Divine judgments on sinners as diversified in their character as human offences are. And the making manifest of these judgments to enlightened sinners, justified only by His grace and through the Lamb, includes the disclosing of the necessity for all His judgments.

The fact and necessity of Divine judgments with every sinner, whether believer or unbeliever, are prominently placed in the Word of God as the inseparable associations of the present life. And these serve to disclose the great importance of this preliminary state of being with every human subject. "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with Thee, Thou hast appointed His bounds that he cannot pass" (Job 14: 1-5.) If the Divinely desired end with mankind could have been realised by less painful means, then it is certain that such means would have been used. Only the necessity for His judgments presented in such Scriptures as Heb. 12: 6, 7, 10 permits of Infinite Love inflicting them, or of allowing all His redeemed ones to pass their lives under the conditions of the existing creation. "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." And all this is "For our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness." This beneficent object is as universal as His judgments; it knows no exceptions since all are sinners.

Judgments on sins inseparable from being in the human nature; on those done with wilfulness by all at some portions of their lives; on vile and criminal offences, and on iniquities of the heart, are all recorded in the Divine Word as keys to human history and the all-embracing moral government of God. And some very severe judgments are still to come, and will be experienced by different communities and individuals living on the Earth during the ending of the present Age, and during and at the end of the coming Age. The Prophetic forecasts of these coming judgments in such Scriptures as Matt. 25: 31-46, Rev. 20: 7-15, etc., are responsible for the diversified hopeless theories of the future prevalent in the religious

world, and over which all singers of the New Song, "had gotten the victory." What a vast domain is comprehended in the judgments of God, and how wonderfully privileged are those to whom "Thy judgments are made manifest."

A final feature of this making manifest of His judgments is presented in an enlightened recognition of the place of death in the moral government of God in the course of the existing creation. Only in the first and second creations has death any place as an ever-occurring event, and a continued state. In the New and Third Creation, and as defined in Rev. 21:4, death has no place. At its commencement there is the bringing into Eternal Life of the last in the death state, without possibility of any ever dying again. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." As emphasised in the Scriptures, and in agreement with the facts of human history, death has come to all the human race as a consequence from the sin of the first man, and only as an individual penalty for sin to him. The justified by faith and the unjust share the same condemnation, and with both it is true that the wages of sin is death. No human faith in or obedience to Divine truth can remove the condemnation imposed on all from the first sin of the first man. As illustrated in the matter of Malachi 3.15, 18, it is not during the present life, nor in death but in the future state, when the differences between true believers and the unjust are made manifest. And this, in the different glories of the Celestial and Terrestrial. "Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not." Death knows no difference in its subjects.

When death comes to the individual it is after all approved judgments have been visited upon him that Infinite wisdom appoints, and is itself a final judgment. In the Divine estimate, and with every sinner, death settles the account of sin. When Eternal Life is given to all through the redemption by the Lamb, and in the different "Ways of Life" previously considered, there is not any further remembrance of sins with any resurrected ones. It is true of all these as of Israel in the coming Age, and declared in Heb. 8:12: "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." And the same Nation of Israel, which has been a living testimony to the Divine dealings in so many directions, and is to be the first to experience the Divine forgiveness and cleansing of all the Nations of the Earth, illustrates another matter of the moral government of God. In several Scriptures such as Zech. 8:13, Rom. 2:24, Israel is referred to as the most wicked of all Nations, and as being responsible for the Name of God being blasphemed amongst the Gentiles. And Israel has suffered more than any other Nation through the direct judgments of God. In Jerem. 31:28 there is the forecast and definition of that which has been the experience of this Nation for the whole course of the Gospel Age, and the different one to commence shortly. "Like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to

throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith the Lord."

This changed attitude of Jehovah is not the result of any change in the Nation of Israel, for at their restoration to His favour and to their own land they are still unbelieving and disobedient. It is as the result of His abundant grace after their restoration that Israel learns to love Him, and becomes the humblest and most devoted of all Nations. "Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you; be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O House of Israel. But for Mine holy Name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went" (Ezek. 36:32, 22). But concerning all the sins of all the generations of this Nation, and as illustrating the same with all Nations, there is first the matter of Isaiah 22 14: "Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord of hosts." This is in agreement with our previous tracings, that death settles the account of sin, but retains all its subjects until these are delivered from its power by redemption through the Lamb. A further matter in the same connection is presented in Isaiah 40: 1, 2: "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." This term "double" has the significance here as in connected references such as Zech. 9:12, to a full equivalent. In the estimate of Infinite justice the judgments inflicted by Jehovah on all sinners, transgressors during their lives, and at death, is a double or equivalent. Not, indeed, that any sins are expiated by experiences of judgment, but that when death comes, the account is settled. The "putting away of sin" and the liberation of all its subjects is accomplished by the Redemption in Christ "in Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." (Eph. 1:7.)

In concluding this section treating the Song of Moses and the Song of the Lamb we desire to observe that these combined themes of praise drawn from the Harp of God are not fully learnt and sung by any until the very near approach of Christ. Not until these themes are fully unsealed could any learn them, nor be amongst those that "could not" learn this New Song and be rejected on that account. This also explains why there is not any suggestion in Rev. 14:3-5, nor in Rev. 15:2-4, of anyone failing or falling away after learning the New Song. On the one hand it is emphasised that not learning it obtains with the disapproved, and, on the other hand, that learning it brings approval before His Throne. "And no man could learn that Song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the Earth," not only limits the numbers of learners to those specified, but intimates that all these will be redeemed from the Earth. This would appear most emphatically to indicate that none can miss the redemption if they learn and join in the Song of praise to God. The same obtains in the section in Rev. 15:2, 4, and with all the singers on the Sea of glass; "And them that had gotten the victory." The standing is that of victory attained and bestowed, and which only requires continuance in the offering of the praise to bring to impending Eternal victory. From these

considerations it appears quite clear that, since learning and joining in the praise marks victory and brings Divine approval, then nothing but ceasing to have part in this praise could forfeit the privileged standing conferred. The silence of the Scriptures in regard to this latter possibility is eloquent and worthy of our imitation.

One manifest need for the section in Rev. 15:2-4 which defines the two themes of the combined New Song is that "getting ready" for Christ's return requires understanding of both when they are fully disclosed from His Word. The declared fact in Rev. 14:3, "And no man could learn that Song but," etc, clearly intimates that none are left without opportunity of learning within the domain where the Gospel has gone. And from the time when these themes are available to those anxious to understand until the appearing of Christ, or the going forth of His notification, learning the Song with all really desirous is the order obtaining. Only when it is manifest to the Divine Nature that no others of the living generation are willing to be thus taught is the terminus brought by the going forth of the Midnight Cry. It is certain that the time appointed for the testing of the last generation in its attitude to the new Song is so arranged by Infinite wisdom as to sift both the Second Advent movement and the religious world, and to complete this at the predetermined time of His Son's return. And the totality of this universal sifting is that of 144,000 virgins praising Him with the New Song in its two themes. Exactly the same matter of bringing into the one standing and confessed faith of the last community of Christ's people is presented in Rom. 11:25. "That blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." These last singers of the new Song are this "fulness," and their "coming in" is first to the standing on the Sea of Glass confessing the new enlightened praise. This same "coming in" is completed when "they that were ready went in with Him to the Marriage."

IX.

"THE BRIDEGROOM'S COMING TO THE MARRIAGE."

It is hoped that the matters of the previous section will materially contribute to a fuller recognition of what is comprised in living persons being ready to meet Christ. Also, of the calm and confident state brought to all these when the Midnight Cry goes forth and during the interval to His coming to the Marriage. Our consideration of the narrative of the Virgins resumes at the stage of Matt. 25:10. "And while they went to buy the Bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the Marriage; and the door was shut." And these matters are recorded as having transpired—in the past tense—in agreement with an accurate illustration of coming realities exactly like them. The illustrative wise Virgins waiting at the one place for the Bridegroom are, on his arrival, taken by him into another and enclosed place, where the Marriage is to take place behind a closed door. This narrative does not present any illustration of the Marriage taking place. No human associations could illustrate the union of Christ with His multitudinous Bride, nor display this latter, which comprises a great multitude of men and women whose numbers are not revealed. In the great reality illustrated by the wise Virgins going with the Bridegroom into the Marriage, the living 144,000 Virgins of both sexes are but a tithe of the Bride within the closed door. How these living Virgins cease to be male and female when united to Christ and made partakers of His Nature, is a glorious matter of truth expounded in other parts of the Sacred Word. In the parable of the Marriage Feast in Matt. 22:1-13, and where the whole Gospel Age is comprehended in the illustration and all true believers in the guests, all sex distinctions and differences are obliterated in the estimate of the great King providing the Feast. This also is the matter of Gal. 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." The illustrative Virgins comprising male and female, in Christ's narrative, were but His creations for the parable.

A highly important cause for the Marriage being presented in this latter as succeeding the closed door, finds illustration in the parable of Matt. 22:1-13. This Feast of the Gospel Age is during the absence of the Son—the Coming Bridegroom—and all its guests are to become Virgins at the Marriage. Thus within the "door," and when the living Virgins enter, there are far greater numbers of Virgins present at the Marriage, in fulfilment of the promise that "the dead in Christ shall rise first." Since the designation of Virgins is not employed with believers until the Era of the Time of the End, then all the resurrected dead in Christ only become Virgins at their entry into the Marriage before the living Virgins. It is in harmony

with all Prophetic testimony, and as indicated in Matt. 25: 10, that living Virgins are the last to enter and that the door is shut at their entrance. But the same "door" is opened first to admit the more numerous company of Virgins from all previous generations of the Age. All these latter find no mention at all in this narrative of Matt. 25: 1-13, which is an illustrative forecast of the Virgin movement of the Time of the End.

The coming of the Bridegroom in Matt. 25: 10 is to the living Virgins, but these on entering the Marriage are only a small section of the community previously brought by the Bridegroom. And with all these the name of Virgins, as signifying young, unmarried and chaste persons of both sexes, has powerful significance. In several other Scriptures all these are also referred to as "Children of God." They are young in the relationship entered by faith, and need to be trained, disciplined, to prepare them for the glorious family inheritance of God's Household, as in Ephes. 2:20. But these Virgins and Children never grow old after their union with the Bridegroom and entrance into their Father's House. In this they are an exceptional but not isolated community of Children. All sharing the "Terrestrial Glory" on the new Earth, and comprising the great majority of the Redeemed of the Lord and by the Lamb, are referred to in Rom 8: 21 as being "delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." The designation of these latter during the present life and in several Scriptures is that of "children of disobedience," while that of true believers is "children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." It is concerning the nature and inheritance of these believing Children, God's Household, that "Heirs of God, joint Heirs with Christ," is employed in Rom. 8: 17, and that 1st Cor. 2: 9 has application. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

Previous to the Time of the End, and its Second Advent movement described in Matt. 25: 1 as that of "Ten Virgins," all Christ's people were the Children of God but not Virgins. An approaching Marriage at the return of the Bridegroom is responsible for the use of this new designation. In 2nd Cor. 11: 2 there is the use of the singular, Virgin, employed by Paul as a comparison to the whole Christian Church of the first century, and not as in the narrative of Matt. 25: 1-13 as an individual designation of every believer in the One Hope. "For I have espoused you to one Husband, that I may present you as a chaste Virgin to Christ." But even this comparison of the first century does not receive realisation until Christ becomes the Husband by the Marriage. When all those addressed by Paul, and all others brought into the Divine family through the same Gospel preached by him, are presented to Christ the Bridegroom, it will be as a chaste Virgin with each and a great multitude of Virgins with all.

To contrast the one place where the illustrative five Virgins were with that where the 144,000 living Virgins are when the Bride-

groom comes, is to recognise the different proportions of the illustration and the reality. And such a comparison brings appreciation of Christ's carefulness in defining the coming of the illustrative Bridegroom in Matt. 25: 10. "The Bridegroom came" is all that is said, without specifying where he came to. In the great reality thus illustrated the real Bridegroom comes to another place to that occupied by the living Virgins. But He comes to an appointed meeting place, where the Virgins enter with Him into the Marriage. Moreover, the presentation of the absence of the foolish Virgins from where the wise are when the Bridegroom comes serves to show that the respective states and not literal places are the matters of illustration. "While they went to buy, the Bridegroom came." The one place where the ready wise Virgins are when Christ descends from Heaven to meet them is the Earth and its different lands. And this also is the place where the foolish Virgins are but in an altogether different state to that of the wise. Nothing could be more powerful than that of presenting the foolish as being away seeking to buy oil, when the Bridegroom meets the wise Virgins. And although these wise are scattered all over the Earth, and largely unknown to each other, like the illustrative Virgins they are all together in the one place, by being in the one enlightened state of mind. This matter of the narrative of the Virgins is exactly the same in its intimations as the sections in Rev. 14: 3-5; Rev. 15: 2-4. The day of Pentecost found Christ's followers waiting for the promised descent of Holy Spirit, "All with one accord in one place." The last day of the Kingdom opened at Pentecost, the day of His Appearing, presents a duplicate of this in the bigger place of the inhabited Earth.

The prophecy of 1st Thess. 4: 15-17 presents interesting and momentous features of the coming of the Bridegroom to the Marriage. In verse 15 the living Virgins are referred to and as not preceding the dead of previous generations in meeting Christ. In verse 16 the descent of the Lord from Heaven and alone, with the associations of a shout with an Archangel's voice and the Trump of God, is recorded with the declaration that: "The dead in Christ shall rise first." In this 16th verse there is not any statement as to the place or locality of the descent, but only of where it is from. "The Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven." But in verse 17, and in the connection of the removal of the living Virgins to the previously-raised dead in Christ, and to meeting the Lord, there is an intimation given of the terminus of His descent.

After recording in verse 16 the raising of the dead in Christ, first and at His descent, there is in verse 17 this succeeding matter: "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them (the previously-raised dead) in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the Air." In this forecast there is beautifully outlined the dual meeting, with those previously raised, and in the Clouds, and with the Lord in the Air. It is evident that the terms "Clouds and Air" have application to the one place or locality, and that they are only distinguished to mark the two kinds of meeting. Not until the 17th verse, and in dealing with the removal of the living, is there the

reference to being caught up, and the specifying of the locality where those thus removed are taken to. In stating where this latter is, there is also the revealing of the place of the Lord's descent. Thus, only the living and not the dead in Christ are caught up into the clouds and the Air. All these dead of the whole Age are raised in one order at the one moment of time, at the place where the Lord descends. It would be purposeless to raise these on the Earth and afterward remove them to the place where the meeting-place where the Lord is. As indicated in 1st Cor. 15:52, the raising of all the dead in Christ first, and in one company, is but a momentary work, and is immediately succeeded by the momentary work of removing from all parts of the Earth the living wise Virgins. And this latter brings as sudden a change from mortality to Immortality.

But even the specifying of the "Air" as being the meeting-place does not bring to the mind any definite place, hence calls for as it receives further exposition than that given in the definitions of 1st Thess. 4:17. If indeed, this matter of the place of the Lord's descent was not revealed in Inspiration, there would be excuse for prevailing vague theories as to the "Air and Clouds" intended in this prophetic forecast given through Paul. The strict literalness of the prophecy forbids all attempts to reduce any of its features to the mystical or symbolical. The Clouds and Air are as exact as the Lord's descent, and the revealed procedure with the two classes of Christ's people. Apart from this and connected forecasts it is not possible for any mortals to know of the order of the Bridegroom's coming. The Air or Atmosphere is on and above the surface of the fixed and level Earth, and extends upward to a height unexplored and unmeasured by man. It is the wonderful provision of Infinite wisdom for breathing creatures of all kingdoms of the Earth, including mankind. All earthly creatures live by breathing, and in this man has not any superiority over other creatures, during his earthly life in the flesh and for the course of the existing creation.

When the Bridegroom comes to the Marriage it is to a particular locality in the Air, and this has connection with His bodily ascent from the Earth to the exalted Heaven of His Father, when He departed Home so many centuries ago. This departure was not only from the Earth and through its Atmosphere, but from a particular part of the Earth and through a particular part of its Atmosphere. He ascended from the Mount of Olives in the vicinity of the city of Jerusalem, and in the sight of one hundred and twenty privileged witnesses. This Ascension, which is twice referred to in Acts 1:2-9 as that of being "taken up," had its first connection with the first Advent, as marking a definite ending to the first appearing. It was also a beginning to the necessary and lengthy "waiting for His Son from Heaven" with all His followers on Earth. And it provided an infallible proof for the faith of all coming generations, both of the fact of His resurrection and of His bodily removal from Earth to Heaven.

But the bearing of this Ascension on the manner of His return from Heaven was not disclosed until immediately after the

Ascension was accomplished. "And while they looked steadfastly toward Heaven as He went up, behold, two Men stood by them in white apparel." (Acts 1 10) With the passing out of their sight of the departing One and as the eager watchers continued to gaze above, lost in wonder, two Messengers from Heaven suddenly stood beside them with a particular message. The manifest need for this Angelic visit and message at the terminus of Christ's ascension was for a service that could not be rendered before, and that had not been previously performed. There was not any need for Angelic instruction of the disciples on the One Hope of Christ's return, or on any matters of faith connected with the Kingdom of Heaven. For the whole course of His ministry Christ was the only Teacher and Preacher, without any need for Angelic preaching or teaching. But the completed Ascension brought the necessity for the Angelic visit and message. If Christ's return as Bridegroom was to be to the Mount of His departure or to any other part of the Earth, then before His departure He would have explained this matter to His disciples. But in finally telling these latter at the Last Supper of His coming again to receive them unto Himself He did not tell them exactly where He would come to.

It is only in this connection that the Angelic message of Acts 1:11 had application: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into Heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into Heaven." This last clause is the key to the manner of the return. The Earth was not referred to, but only the going into Heaven. The coming again will be to exactly the same locality in the Atmosphere where He passed from their sight, and like His departure, alone. Every care was taken to disassociate any attendant Angels with the Ascension, since not any of these attend Him at His descent. When the Angelic message of Acts 1: 11 is rightly recognised as expounding a matter not otherwise revealed, there is also intelligent understanding of the matter of 1st Thess. 4: 17, of being caught up in the Clouds to meet the Lord in the Air. The revealed locality of this meeting is directly over the city of Jerusalem beyond the range of human observation.

For obvious reasons Christ ascended to Heaven during the day or while it was light in the area of Palestine. It was necessary that His departure should be visible to the human witnesses and as far as their sight would carry in a clear Eastern sky. No such necessity obtains with His descent, since its terminus is beyond the range of human sight. There are many references to the day and hour of Christ's arrival at the appointed meeting place, in the Gospels and in His own parables and prophecies. And all these emphasise that both times are unrevealed and past finding out by mortals. In all these references and in agreement with the revealed hour of Midnight for the going forth of His notification of His approach, the intended matter relates to the day and hour of His bodily descent from Heaven. Indeed were it not from the emphatic matters of the two parables of Matt. 25: 1-13, Luke 13: 36-38, we could not gather from the other prophecies of Christ

the truth of His previous notification before the summons on His arrival for all His people to meet Him. The confirmation of this previous notification is presented in 1st Thess. 4: 16, and as an inseparable association of the return of the Lord. But when reading Christ's expositions of the Gospel Age and of His second appearing, it is important to bear in mind this matter of the Midnight Cry, Knock or Shout preceding His personal descent.

But since wise and foolish found by the notification are unchanged in their respective states and standing, during the brief interval to the arrival of the Bridegroom, all earnest exhortations to be ready and watchful can be seen in their true significance. Only in one reference does Christ define the portion of the particular day of His coming when He will arrive. In this, as with the going forth of the Midnight Cry, there is the clear intimation of a night coming, but not as with the notification of the exact hour of arrival. In this matter also the Holy Land is the standard in its times of day and night. Mark 13: 35-37 contains this isolated forecast of the portion of the momentous day of His coming when He will arrive at the appointed meeting place. "Watch ye therefore; for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at cock-crow, or in the morning." These four are, as noted in another section of this work, the designations of night watches. By specifying these and refraining from any mention of the hours of the day or light, it is evident that Christ intended to intimate a night coming. Within these four watches of the night in the area beneath the meeting place—the Holy Land—He will descend. By taking the times of day and night in Palestine as a determining factor, all other parts of the Earth North and South of the Equator will reveal their different times of the momentous hour of arrival. Unless Christ had desired to fix the minds of all His followers on this specified portion of the unrevealed day of His return there does not appear any cause or reason for distinguishing it from the hours of the same day. Exactly the same need for watching, being ready, exists with the living Virgins, whether the return takes place during the daylight or during the night watches specified in Mark 13: 35-37, and obtaining at the earthly centre directly beneath the place of descent.

The designation of "Master of the House" in Mark 13: 35 and the exhortation to watch for His coming, is another matter to be noted. While the designation of Bridegroom corresponds with that of Master of the House in some connections it does not in others, and the latter is made necessary by these. Another difference of the same coming of the Bridegroom is that of Him being a "Thief" to all taken unawares by His sudden appearing, as in Matt. 24: 43; Luke 12: 39. The Bridegroom is also the Master of the House which comprises all His approved people of the present Age. Christ is not Bridegroom to foolish Virgins nor to the religious world outside of the Second Advent movement, but He is Master of the House to all these in closing the door of the Kingdom of Heaven and excluding them. In Luke 13: 24-27, and in this latter connection, there is another use of this designation. "When once the Master of the

House is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door." All these constituents of the religious world know that the door of the Kingdom is closed against them by the removal of the 144,000 wise Virgins without death, and then petition for its opening to them. The same known closed door with the different class of foolish Virgins, with their later appeal to be admitted, is the matter of Matt. 25:10-12, hence is the work of the same Master of the House. But the foolish Virgins, unlike the "Many" of Luke 13: 24-27, hear the Midnight Cry and seek to obtain understanding before Christ's arrival. But to both alike and to another community of "Many" mentioned in Matt. 7:22-23, and composed of religious teachers and leaders then living on Earth, the relationship of Christ is that of Master of the House, and not that of Bridegroom. But the coming of the Bridegroom is also that of the Master of the House.

And this coming is the first of three distinct Comings involved in the Second Advent of Christ, and defined in Matt. 24:27, 30-37; that of verse 27 is the first of these and the only one to be watched for and ready.. The coming of Matt. 24:37 is the second, and marks the commencement of the Harvest succeeding the Time of Jacob's trouble; that of verse 30 is the third, at the end of the Harvest and on the clouds of Heaven in the sight of living humanity. And this third has three distinct Revelations of Christ and His glorified people. The revealed truth of the Second Advent is that of a period of some forty years comprising its threefold accomplishment, like the one of the First Advent, which comprised thirty-three and a half years. The first of the three comings of Christ is that of His bodily descent from Heaven as Bridegroom and Master of the House. There is no exhortation to watch for the second or third comings, but only for the first. The subjects of the two others will be of Divine arrangement and appointment. Those now living on the Earth comprise the generation to witness the first coming. The only ones from generations of the past brought to life during the coming of the Bridegroom are His believing people, and this is the only one of the three comings having any connection with the dead of previous times. Any further bringing of the dead to life is delayed until after the Harvest, and to the commencement of the Millennial Kingdom, when the times of restoration to a former estate bring back to human life vast numbers of the dead, viz., all Israel, all children, and all Gentile adults dying in ignorance.

But an important matter to be noted with the three comings of Christ, in Matt. 24:27, 30, 37, is that in each He refers to Himself as the Son of Man. All the other designations applied to Christ and connected with and expressing His different relationships do not interfere with the use of the One Name of Son of Man to the One Saviour of mankind. In each reference to the coming of the Bridegroom, of the Master of the House, of the Lord of the watching servants, there is the inseparable connection of the all-embracing Name of Son of Man. (Matt. 24:44, Matt. 25:13, Luke 12:40.) The first use of this name and by Christ was early in His ministry and in a pathetic association, as recorded in Matt. 8:20: "And Jesus

saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." The absence of any comparison with human beings and their lots, and the mention of the Divinely-arranged provision even for foxes and birds, emphasised the same with Himself. The Father's will and business required this earthly lot of the Son of Man. To His own followers as to the people of Israel, this Name was the one of Christ's use of Himself. Of His followers and at an advanced stage of His ministry He asked the questions of Matt. 16:13-16. "Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am? But whom say ye that I am?" Peter's answer that the Son of Man was the Christ, the Son of the living God brought from the Saviour the exultant words, "Blessed art thou."

When Christ referred to Himself in the hearing of the people of Israel, and in different connections, including that of His sacrifice on the Cross, as **Son of Man**, they were perplexed. This Name of the Messiah was not intelligible to Israel, although it was the one used in Daniel 7:13 and manifestly concerning Messiah's Kingdom. But in reply to His declaration of John 12:23-33, their answer of verse 34 manifested their state of mind. "The people answered Him, We have heard out of the Law that Christ abideth forever, and how sayest Thou, the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?" The designation of Son of God applied to Him from His entrance into life as the First born of every creature, and to His second birth in the human nature. As in the several Scriptures this Son of God was sent by the Father into the world of mankind. The relationship of Father and Son obtained before this sending and coming of the Son. But entrance into the human nature of the Son of God, and the accomplishment in that nature of the putting away of all sin and redemption of all sinners, made necessary the isolated and distinctive Name of Son of Man. This was an intensified phase of Son of God which brings to Him all dominion and universal adoration as in John 5:26-27, Philip. 2:7-11: "And hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man." If He had not come into the human nature and rendered the glorious services of His life and death, He would not have received this authority nor the promised universal adoration. Neither would He have been the Bridegroom coming for His Bride, which, as declared in Ephes. 5:25, He loved and gave Himself for it. But in agreement with His body of flesh being sacrificed for sin like the burnt offerings in Israel's Tabernacle, there is need for reference to His glorious and conquering body as being that of the Son of God with power. (Rom. 1:4, Philip. 3:21.) Thus the Name of "**Son of Man**" will be an Eternal one, and a reminder and memento of the earthly life and triumphs of the Son of Jehovah's love.

The coming of the Son of Man as Bridegroom, Lord, Master of the House is that of Matt. 24:27; Luke 17:24. "For as the lightning cometh out of the East, and shineth even unto the West; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be." In this way He will come to the Marriage at the appointed meeting place. Both the rapidity and domain of the lightning are selected illustrations of this first coming. That East and West as used in Matt. 24:27 are intended only as extremities from each other, and traversed in a moment,

by a flash of lightning is manifest from the parallel reference in Luke 17: 24: "For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under Heaven, shineth unto the other part under Heaven." Not any such comparison is made with the later coming of the Son of Man, recorded in Matt. 24: 37 and likened with the days of Noah, nor with the third and final coming on the clouds of Heaven in the sight of living humanity, forecasted and described in Matt. 24: 30.

One revealed cause for disclosing the rapidity of the first coming is manifest from Matt. 24: 26, or the immediately preceding verses to that defining the lightning-like coming. "Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the desert; go not forth; behold, He is in secret chambers, believe it not." The "You" addressed in this verse, and warned, are the wise believers of this Era who are all singing the New Song. And the "They" presenting the false theories specified are also believers in His return but are false prophets, foolish Virgins. All those addressed as "You" in verses 25, 26 are by understanding of due truth the "Very elect" referred to in verse 24. To these latter there is given the warning of prevalent delusions in the Second Advent movement, together with the exact explanation of the lightning-like manner of Christ's descent. Apart from this connection and in agreement with the uniting together of the two matters by Christ in Matt. 24: 26, 27, there does not appear to be the need for mentioning the length of time of the Bridegroom's coming from Heaven. But the matter of Matt. 24: 24 in its connection with the "Very Elect" is in agreement with our tracings on the privileged standing of learning and singing the New Song. "For there shall arise false christi, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." They deceive all others but cannot deceive those "Coming in" to the standing of guileless Virgins praising God with melody from His Harp.

This comparison of the first coming to the rapidity of lightning, gives added force to the several references to the Hour of His return, and not only the Day. At the unrevealed hour of the unrevealed day of His descent, and like a flash of lightning, the Son of Man, the Bridegroom, descends for His bride. A like brevity and rapidity in the same associations is the revealed order of the assembling of the constituents of the Bride. The raising of the dead in Christ, the catching away of ready wise Virgins, is a duplicate to the order of His coming. "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump." (1st Cor. 15: 51, 52.) A flash of lightning is the comparison with the rapidity of Christ's descent, and the twinkling of an eye that of raising the approved dead and of removing and changing 144,000 living Virgins. And as all these are thus brought to the Marriage with the Lamb they are in the bringing, united to Him, made partakers of His Nature. This Marriage is not any ceremony; the first part of the First Resurrection fully accomplishes it, and as 1st John 3: 2 declares, "When He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." The same wonderful truth concerning all constituents of His Bride is presented in the words of Philip. 3:21:

"Who will transform the body of our humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body."

The closed door to the Marriage is a sign in Matt. 25: 10-12 which has powerful significance in the reality intended. "Afterward came also the other Virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us." As noted elsewhere by us, these are the first of three different communities appealing in prayer to Christ for admission into the Kingdom. All these know by the infallible sign of the removal of living Virgins that the Kingdom is closed, the door shut. And to each of these three communities appealing for admittance Christ answers with a spoken reply, in varying phrases of reproof and refusal (Matt. 7: 22, 23; Matt 25: 12; Luke 13: 25-27.) Nothing but the known removal of living persons from all over the Earth could bring such conviction of the closed door to these communities.

But even this marvellous evidence of the ending of the present "Great Salvation is added to by the spoken reply from Christ to the appeals of the three communities of petitioners. So desirous was He for the last generation of His people to be filled with "due truth" that this speaking to the rejected of the same generation from behind the known closed door finds threefold mention in the Scriptures just quoted. To no others save wise Virgins will this remarkable association of Christ's return make intelligent appeal, hence their enlightenment was the sole cause for this forecast being given by Christ and written in the three distinct references. As will be more manifest from later considerations, this matter of the Son uttering particular messages of enlightening due truth to the last community of His people has diversified manifestation, and which gives a deeper meaning than is otherwise seen in the profound words of Heb. 1: 2: "Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." To the living Virgins at His return Christ spake truths of supreme importance in their "getting ready," which Truths make no enlightening appeal to previous generations of believers.

When it is recognised that the three distinct communities of Matt. 7: 22, 23, Matt. 25: 12, Luke 13: 25-27, petitioning Christ for the opening of the known closed door of the Kingdom, comprise the majority of the living generation in the area of the Gospel, Christ's spoken answer to each and all of these is seen as a tremendous matter. And in turn this "answer" succeeding the universal matter of Luke 21: 35 discloses the completion with living mankind of all connected with Christ's appearing for His believing people of the Gospel Age. "For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole Earth." This invisible return can only be a universal snare by the known removal of living believers from all parts of the Earth. And this is succeeded by the petitions to the invisible Lord of the vast numbers comprised in the three specified communities. The prevailing conditions of life in every Nation, and which are considered in the last section of this Work and in another important connection, further contribute to making the appeals for the opening of the door of the Kingdom solemnly real. Only those who have learnt the New Song can read these appeals and Christ's answers apart from all dark forebodings, and with certain assurance of a later glorious sequel to all these petitioners.

X.

"THE PARABLE OF THE GOODMAN OF THE HOUSE."

This parable, which is recorded in Matt. 24:43, Luke 12:39, has an associated application with the ones we have considered, at the Era of Christ's return. Hence in Luke's account, it is grouped with the parable of watching servants, and in Matthew's with the several matters of Christ's sudden coming. This latter has universal significance and results, as declared in Luke 21:35, and not only those coming on the Second Advent movement and religious world. "For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole Earth." The circulation of the Scriptures in all the known languages of living mankind has brought the present generation into a position which no other could occupy in the regard of recognition of the accomplished Second Advent, when it takes place. But, and as involved in the revealed purpose of the present Age, responsibility to the "Great Salvation" freely offered by Jehovah is limited to the domain where the Gospel has been circulating throughout the Age. European civilisation, with its offshoots in new Continents or Islands of the Seas, and not Heathendom, with its thousand millions and their own Divinely-imposed experience and problems, is directly, vitally, and individually affected by Christ's coming as the Bridegroom. And this individual aspect of all in the domain where the Kingdom of Heaven has been offered, is the theme of the parable of the goodman of the house.

In the parable of Luke 12: 36-38, and as previously considered, the illustrative servants of the one lord are presented as being all in the one house of their lord, not any has a house of his own. In this the one House of Christ, to which Heb. 3: 6, 14 applies, finds illustration. "Whose House are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the Hope firm unto the end." And this same House, with its glorious Hope, is the one of Heb. 6:18, where all within have "fled for refuge to lay hold upon the Hope set before us." "The 'singular house' used in application to Christ's believing people and their standing, is responsible for the singular with the 'goodman' and his house. And with the former the one House contains all; with the latter every goodman has his own house, but all these, by being exactly alike, can also be properly spoken of as one house. The designation of "goodman" or householder in this parable, and to those outside of Christ's House, is in contrast with the one of slaves or servants in the parables of the Kingdom and its peoples. Every "goodman" has a sense of self-sufficiency, self-confidence in neglecting or in refusing the Divine offer through His Son of the great salvation, and in not looking for nor loving Christ's appearing. All the grace and love of God in the Gospel make no appeal to the goodman. He does not realise any lack in himself or in his house.

Like as with the parables of the watching servants, the Virgins, with their lamps expecting the Bridegroom, so with the different one of the "goodman" and his house. There is the concentrating in this on the unexpected coming of a Thief in the night, and the particular night intended is that of Christ's coming for His house. "That if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up." Exactly the same need for watching obtains with every "goodman" as with every servant, in obedience to the matter of Mark 13:37, spoken to all living during the watching Era. "And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch." Not any person within the area of the Gospel but is included in this earnest appeal by Christ, and no excuse will be valid when He comes if not found watching. This powerfully indicates that all within this area of adult age and rational mind could have been within the Kingdom, if they had manifested the teachable spirit. And all these would then be found watching.

The two aspects and results of the one coming of Christ are thus presented in the parable of the watching servants, and that of the goodman of the house, in Luke 12: 36-39. In the one the return is that of the Lord to the watching and expectant servants delightedly welcoming Him. In the other the same coming is presented as that of a Thief; undesired, unexpected. The same obtains in the different results outlined in the two parables, from this one coming. A blessed state results with all in the Lord's house watching for Him and loving His appearing. But with every "goodman's" house there is the breaking through by the Thief, which can alone be avoided by watching. "He would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken through." This breaking through is as extensive as the house of the goodman, and takes away from every one of these goodmen all self-confidence and assurance, and false ideas of the security of their houses of unbelief and indifference. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God," was Paul's true confession written by him in 2nd Cor. 3:5. And this is to be instilled into every mortal by one of two ways defined in Isaiah 26:9: "With my soul have I desired Thee in the night; yea with my spirit within me will I seek Thee early; for when Thy judgments are in the Earth, the inhabitants of the Earth will learn righteousness."

The parable of the goodman and his house was given by Christ to remove all causes for uncertainty as to what happens to the living and indifferent of mankind at His appearing. All such theories as those of the uprising of some presumed Antichrist, to oppress the living generation after Christ has removed His people from the Earth, are in violent conflict with the Inspired Word. Christ is the sole Arbiter of life and death with all mankind at His return. The One whose coming is as a Thief, unexpected and undesired by every "goodman," does the breaking through the house of every one of these. Only the One who redeemed all has authority of life and death with all. This Thief, unlike all others, does not come to steal any material thing, and is only made a Thief by the wrong attitude

of self-conscious mortals. The same One at the same coming gives Immortal Life to all His watching ones, and takes from every "goodman" the right and power of mortal life.

In 1st Thess. 5: 1-4 the matter of the parable of the "goodman and his house" receives further elaboration, and in this there is the making manifest of what is involved in breaking through his house, and what the Thief takes. "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief" This is in agreement with Christ's parable that His return is only as a thief to those not watching, nor expecting Him. The twice declared destruction of all to whom this coming is as a thief, in 1st Thess. 5: 3, has the further comparison to travail upon a woman, or to the several pangs of gestation. Not all the goodman class will end their lives at the one time, but all are appointed to death during the Era preceding the Harvest, and succeeding the coming as a Thief. And with each death is to come suddenly and not as the result of mere natural causes. This matter of Paul's prophecy gives added force to the forecast in Jerem. 30: 5-9 of the severity of the Time of Jacob's trouble.

With the closing of the door of the Kingdom of Heaven, and the judgments on all the "goodman" class, there is introduced on Earth another work of the Lord, and with those outside of the previous call and area of the Kingdom. The second great Exodus of Israel out of all the lands of the Gentiles and to their own land is one phase of this new work. It is because of all the living descendants of Jacob-Israel—being the subjects of the Divine management and special direction that this Era is called the "Time of Jacob's trouble." It is thus distinguished from the general "Times of the Gentiles," which latter do not fully end until the terminus of the Harvest. "He shall be saved out of it" is the promise to living Israel in Jerem. 30: 7, and in marked contrast with the forecasted sudden destruction on all the "goodman" class amongst enlightened Gentiles. The second Exodus of living Israel, with contemporary and varied visitations on Gentile nations, fills the Era between Christ's return and the commencement of the Harvest. This latter is introduced by the deliverance of Jerusalem as in Zech. 14: 1-5 by Christ attended by all His saints. This is the commencement of Christ's second coming as Son of Man, the one of Matt. 24: 37. The great and universal Harvest then commencing is with a generation not previously responsible, or with those not twenty years old at Christ's return as Bridegroom, His first coming. All the millions of "Heathendom" will also be subjects of the diversified operations of the Harvest, the first of which is the Universal preaching outlined in Matt. 24: 14; Rev. 14: 6, 7.

With all previous generations of the Age to this last one, the "goodman" class has also been far more numerous than the servant class, as forecasted in Matt. 7: 13, 14 and by Christ, but finds no

mention in the parable of the "goodman and his house" in Matt. 24. 43, Luke 12: 39. But breaking through his house by the coming of the Thief can only take place with the generation witnessing that coming, at the end of the watching Era. It was not manifest to human sight during the long times of "Waiting for His Son" how the houses of the many generations of the "goodmen" were being broken through. But it will be manifest to all the living during the coming Era of the "breaking through" in regard to the present generation. Only those singing the New Song have had this universal judgment—with all others—made manifest to them. The "goodman class" of the whole Age, as well as of the last generation, are to remain in the death state for the whole course of the coming Age of a thousand years. The exceptional privileges with the living at Christ's return previously provided in the "Due truth" for the wise to understand, make "Just and true" His judgments on rejectors of this. And these Judgments are the means of teaching lessons—before death—of great importance in their bearing on a subsequent resurrection life in the New Creation, beyond the Millennial Age.

In this presentation of the important place and significance of the parable of the "Goodman of the house" it was not deemed necessary to further elaborate the revealed matters of human affairs during the Era succeeding the appearing of Christ as Bridegroom. In "Creation and its Sequel" the same Author has devoted considerable attention to the "Time of Jacob's trouble; the Second Exodus of Israel; the uprising, dominion and long continuance of the Man of Sin—Anti-christ—and the Harvest of the Gospel Age." Nothing could be more orderly and enlightening than the Scriptural presentations of these different matters. Each fills its only possible place in the appointed order of events on Earth, and any attempts to alter this orderly sequence by seeking to locate matters transpiring before Christ's return within the succeeding Era effectively confuse the whole Divine Purpose in the minds of all thus deceived and misled.

The long time of Christ's absence in Heaven provided the domain for the imposing organisation of the "Man of Sin" accomplishing its many prophesied results. The short time of the Era elapsing between Christ's return as Bridegroom and His coming for the deliverance of Jerusalem, and introducing the time and work of Harvest, only permits as it fully accomplishes the aftermath of the Gospel Age with all neglectful Gentiles and the wonderful Second Exodus of Israel. The uprising and injurious influences of the "Many false prophets and false christs" referred to by Christ in His great Prophecy were, as clearly intimated by Him, results arising during His absence, and not after His return and His taking complete charge of human affairs. Not until the Harvest does Christ permit any human being or organisation to seek to influence mankind then living, in opposition to His decrees and requirements or to refuse and reject His proclamations as the appointed King of the Earth. And as forecasted in Rev. 17: 12-14 only the revived organisation of the Roman Empire impelled by a religious cause, and at the end of the Harvest, commits the greatest impiety of human history in "making war on the Lamb of God."

XI.

“THE PARABLE OF THE FAITHFUL AND WISE STEWARD.”

This parable is presented in Luke 12: 42-48, and as an answer to Peter's question regarding the significance and application of the two previous parables, of the waiting and watching servants, and the good man and his house. The same parable is also recorded in Matt. 24: 45-51. It is most evident that Christ intended this parable spoken by Him in reply to Peter's question concerning the two previous parables, as containing an explanation of these. But it is very striking that Christ gave a parable as explanation of two preceding ones, and Peter had as good cause for asking explanation of the third parable as for the first and second Peter asked, as in Luke 12: 41, and concerning the parables of verses 36-39: "Lord, speakest Thou this parable unto us, or even to all," and Christ answered with this parable of the Steward, in verses 42-48.

In the first parable of the waiting and watching servants in the one house, no distinctions amongst these are made, and not anything is suggested concerning instruction in waiting and watching, beyond that of the lord's given to all the servants before his departure. So with the second parable of the "goodman of the house" and his neglect to watch. There is nothing in this regarding any one telling him to watch, or of presenting information to him concerning the Coming One. These matters were not omissions in the previous parables, since these latter contained all that was possible of unfolding on the general subjects treated in them. The Great Preacher did not crowd His parables with differing features, but concentrated on the particular ones and in other parables supplied connected and explanatory matters.

As with the parable of the waiting and watching servants, so with this of the faithful and wise Steward. In both there is the concentrating on the illustrative lord's coming and its associations, in including and delineating the previous and longer times of his absence. The present and future tenses are both used—but not the past tense—in this parable of the Steward, both of the movements of the illustrative lord and those of the steward.

Christ opens the parable somewhat abruptly in Luke 12: 42, and careful reading is required to distinguish the Lord speaking from the lord spoken of. The Lord speaking the parable refers to the other lord as looking for a faithful and wise steward to place over his household during his projected absence. Christ presents the selection and appointment of the illustrative steward as being from the lord's servants or slaves, and best fitted of all these latter by his proved wisdom and devotion. Moreover, this selection of the steward, like that of the lord's departure, is presented as a then present matter, and not either past or future. "And the Lord said,

Who then is that faithful and wise steward whom the lord will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?"

In this household, and unlike that of the one in the parable of Luke 12: 36-38, composed only of men slaves, three kinds of servants or slaves are specified, including the steward as the first. In verse 48 the two other kinds are referred to as "Menservants and Maidservants." Before his appointment as steward this servant is presented as being included in the Menservants, and after being made steward he is still—like all the others—the property of his lord. The position and authority given to the selected steward is that only of preparing and dispensing food at proper times to the men and women slaves of the household. This is the utmost of his rulership over the other servants. The necessary food for the steward himself, as well as for the others, is provided by the lord, but is placed in charge of the steward. In this there is also involved that which is later revealed in the parable and at the lord's return, of each slave's work being appointed by the lord before his departure as well as the exceptional work of the steward.

And all this wondrous imagery, with its wealth of diversified and accurate detail, is surely more powerful in presenting the truths intended in its use than if the same truths were given apart from narrative and figure. And the utilising of this form of teaching makes the illustrations used as accurate as Infinite wisdom can make them.

The display of the position and service of the steward is the primary purpose of this parable. The Menservants and Maidservants, ministered to with meat in due season by the steward, do not receive the same prominence as he does in the parable. There is not any mention in it—for example—of rewards or promotions of the others, at the lord's return, as there is with the faithful and wise steward. Only in the matter of disobedience to the lord's commands to each slave, and of this being punished by the lord at his return, are the others of the household as prominently placed as the steward. In this connection verse 46 has application to the steward if found unfaithful, and verses 47, 48 have reference to diversified inflictions on others found neglecting or disobeying their lord's will and command. The form of punishment with these latter, as with the steward, is in agreement with their standing as slaves of their lord, and the customs of life in the social world of the first century. "And the servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes."

Other parables, some of which have been previously considered by us, are framed to set forth the diverse rewarding of all labourers in the work of the Lord, in the method of 1st Cor. 3:8. "And every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour." That which is presented in the illustrative "stripes few or many," is in the reality of the Kingdom realised in withholding authority and dominion, or as indicated in Matt. 5:19, being "least in the Kingdom."

In this illustrative matter of the parable of Luke 12: 42-48, there is first displayed, as in the one of verses 36-38, the waiting servants, of the then present realisation of the first portion of the parable. The illustrative steward was about to be appointed by his lord, and this is intimated in the words of the lord to his household: "Who then is that faithful and wise steward?" The realisation of this feature of the illustration during Christ's ministry and in Apostolic times, reveals the accuracy and wisdom of the parable. The waiting servants of the previous parable were all to be gathered into the lord's house and instructed by the stewards of the explanatory parable. Just as Christ Himself had gathered the Apostles, so these were to be His first stewards for gathering and instructing the other waiting ones of then present times. And these Apostles, like the steward of the parable, were called by their Lord before His departure, but like the illustrative steward, it was after their Lord had gone that there was realised the matter of Acts 1:3 "But ye shall receive power; after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the Earth."

These Apostles, with the one later brought into the same witnessing company of twelve, the Apostle Paul, were the first stewards. All these were inspired men; gifted with deep insight into the Word of their Lord. And this was for the purpose of giving to others the food of life provided by the Lord for then present times: "meat in due season." Several of the Apostles with others of the steward class were used to write the Testimony of their Lord, the New Testament, and to have deep understanding of the Word of the Father given through Moses and the Prophets. And the appointed means with these stewards of ministering were the same as those used by the Lord Himself, Preaching. In 1st Cor. 1:21, Titus 1:3, this one means which pleased the gracious Author of truth, and which was appointed by Him, finds reference. "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. But hath in due times manifested His Word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour." And in Rom. 10: 14, 15 the same matter finds prominence: "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" The accomplishment of preaching the Truth God designed to give for the faith of mankind, required as it received exceptional equipment with wisdom from above of all His appointed stewards. Concerning this gift of wisdom in expounding the Word of God, there is this reference in 1st Cor. 4:1, 2, in application to Paul, and all others of the ministering class of Apostolic times: "Let a man so account of us, as of the Ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."

Although the Apostles were the first stewards, and the only inspired ones, they were but the commencement of the steward class at the beginning of the long, waiting times. In Ephes. 4:11, 12 there is fuller definition of the stewards of those wonderful first days of the Church, when signs and wonders combined with the human

witnesses to attest the truth of Christ's Gospel. "And He gave some, Apostles; and some, Prophets; and some, Evangelists; and some, Pastors and Teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." With the passing of the first stage of the Kingdom, both Apostles and Prophets ceased at the death of the first and only members of these two Inspired companies. Only the Twelve Apostles were Christ's witnesses, and could not have any successors. With the completion of the Divine Word the voice of prophecy ceased, save as every generation since has had its false prophets deceiving many, as forecasted in Matt. 24:11, 24. No true Prophet has existed or ministered since the completion of the Divine Word by the Holy Men of God of the first century.

And all the different kinds of stewards were preachers, and were giving to Christ's household "meat in due season," provided by the Lord for the waiting times. As powerfully forecasted in Daniel 12:9, 10, and considered at length by us in another section, the meat for the household of faith during the watching Era of the Time of the End is of a nature not previously given. The Lord arranged that each section of the steward class in the different times of waiting and watching, and with each generation of these, would receive from Him and give to the household just the food intended by Him for the times. This matter reveals also the like diversity in the promised leading of John 16: 13: "How be it when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth."

In the first stewards there was presented a copy worthy of imitation by all of the same class in later generations, in being faithful and wise. To these first, also, was committed the service of seeking from the communities of believers, others to be stewards for a later generation. These latter were the Elders of frequent mention in the Epistles, able—as the Apostle says in 2nd Tim. 2: 2, "to teach others also." The matter of 1st Peter 5: 1-3, given to the Elders then living, has had realisation with all later ones, including those now living and serving. "Feed the Church of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples for the flock." With the death of the Apostles all the stewards of every succeeding generation were called by the Lord and sent forth to preach, apart from any human ordination. And the evidence of their call was as with their Master and the first stewards, in their message, in being faithful and wise. No generation of the Gospel Age has been without these preaching stewards, as forecasted in Prophecy and attested by History. And these stewards, like the people they minister to, have been in every generation a hidden people not recognised by popular institutions, as in 1st John 3: 1: "Therefore the world knoweth us not because it knew Him not."

Not only the then existing times but also those from the first century to the "Time of the End," or Era of the Lord's return, are comprised in the first verse of the parable of the steward, Luke 12:42. All the long time of the true Lord's absence is compressed

into this verse and its illustrative matter. In verse 43, and as in a flash, there is the carrying forward to the time of the illustrative lord's return to his household. And there is the specifying in this connection, as with the parable of the watching servants, of a blessed state coming at the lord's return to the faithful and wise steward, and not during his absence. "Blessed is that servant whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing." With the "Watching servants" of the other parable this blessed state is associated with just watching. But with the steward it is associated with what he is doing as manifesting his watching. This "So doing" is that of the last clause of verse 42, "To give them their portion of meat in due season." Not any other members of the household find mention in Luke 12-43, but only the ministering steward. In the parable the same steward is presented at the illustrative lord's departure as at his return. And the time of absence is the means of proving whether or not this steward will be faithful and wise, or unfaithful and disobedient.

The matters of illustration also involve that sufficient time elapses for displaying the steward's obedience or disobedience, and that the lord's return finds him doing or neglecting his lord's known commands. And in this there is disclosed a powerful likeness with the Kingdom in the only cause for disobedience, also of the lord's coming unexpectedly on the wicked steward, but not if the steward is doing his lord's commands. In Luke 12: 45 there is outlined this one cause for disobedience, together with what this latter consists of: "But and if that servant say in his heart my lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the Menservants and Maidservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware."

All these features of the parable are most illuminating on the reality intended in their use, and present different matters to those in the parables of the same return already considered by us. In the reality of the Kingdom different persons are the stewards at the Lord's coming to those at His departure. Although the parable is not in this feature a likeness with the Kingdom it does in the same feature illustrate the oneness of the Divine cause of the Gospel Age, and forecasts the continuance of that cause to the Second Advent. And more than this, it clearly indicates that both faithful and wicked stewards will be ministering in that cause when the real Lord comes. The one class will be manifesting watchfulness in giving "Meat in due season to the household"; the other, believing in the heart that His coming is not impending, will be "eating and drinking with the drunken." Thus the same class of ministering stewards, faithful and wise, are found at His return as He left at His departure, and the same kinds of Menservants and Maidservants in His household.

Moreover, this parable of the faithful and wise steward is a highly important key not only to the parable of the waiting and watching servants, and that of the goodman of the house, but also to the exact parable of the Ten Virgins. The servants in the Lord's House, illustrated in the firstmentioned parable, are gathered into it and ministered to by the steward class. Every "goodman" in the

area of the Gospel has in one way or other heard from these stewards of the coming Lord and the wisdom of being found watching when He arrives. Since the Kingdom of Heaven from the commencement of the Time of the End is wholly comprised in the Virgin Movement, then the steward class of the parable under consideration is wholly comprised in the same movement. There are more preachers outside of this movement than within it, but only those believing and teaching the One Hope of Christ's return and Kingdom are in the House of Christ as stewards. And these latter—preaching stewards—are of the two kinds, faithful and wise or unfaithful and wicked, just as the two classes ministered to by them are wise or foolish Virgins. In the changed order of the Time of the End to that of the greater portion of the Waiting times, preaching is not limited to utterances of the voice but embraces the printed page also, in sending forth both Due Truth and false doctrine. No Virgin in this Movement holds beliefs but have been brought by the steward class to the attention and belief. It is as true to-day as at the commencement that preaching is the one Divinely approved method of gathering and building up believers, and also that those found by the Lord at His return ministering "Meat in due season to His household," are stewards of the mysteries of God, like as in 1st Cor. 4: 1, 2.

Thus the two classes of Virgins of wise and foolish present the results of the ministry of the steward class, and are in agreement with the two phases of the steward in Luke 12: 43, 45, and at the lord's return. Wise Virgins reflect the guidance and teaching of the wise and faithful steward; foolish Virgins manifest the injurious result of the teaching and influence of unfaithful and unwise stewards. The section of Prophecy in Matt. 24: 24-26, and previously considered, prominently places one steward class and its injurious influence on many others. "For there shall arise false christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." Responsibility for this deceiving all within the Second Advent Movement save the very elect, is placed upon these false stewards. All these latter are "Second Adventists" and arise during the Era of Christ's return. This is proved by the matter of verse 26 and the declared realised return of Christ by some of the false christs and false prophets of verse 24. Not any preachers outside of the Second Advent Movement present such matters as these to their people.

The designation of "false christs" in Matt. 24: 24, and to living wicked stewards at Christ's return, becomes manifest in significance by the parable we are considering, and the feature in it defined in Luke 12: 45: "And shall begin to beat the Menservants and Maid-servants." Only the lord of these illustrative servants had right and authority to beat his own slaves, hence the wicked steward was usurping his lord's power and authority in this "beating." The counsel and warning to all stewards in 1st Peter 5: 3 has this feature: "Neither as being lords over God's heritage." The only authority of a steward in the real Lord's service is that involved in serving to others the truth revealed to him by his Lord. A false christ in the connection of Matt. 24: 24, is that of a professed steward of the

Lord presenting to others his own theories, in conflict with "Due truth," and arrogating the authority of the One Lord. In referring to the deceiving influences of the false christs and false prophets, in Matt. 24: 24, Christ only mentions the two features of deceiving of verse 26 as particular ones and not the only ones, for reasons which we have already considered. But the one cause for stewards becoming false christs, false prophets, deceiving all save the very elect, is that of Luke 12: 45, and with the illustrative steward: "But and if that servant say in his heart, my lord delayeth his coming." In the parable as in the reality of the Divine cause the steward does not say this to other servants, but only in his own heart.

As manifest with the foolish Virgins in the generations of the Second Advent movement, there is the confessed belief in Christ's impending return. But, in not buying oil and taking it in their vessels; in being unwilling to put aside prejudice at the call of due truth, and in not seeking for understanding and being led into all truth, there is made manifest the real state of the heart. Where there is real belief in and love of the impending return of Christ, there cannot be prejudice against any truth brought to the attention by the Spirit's leading. Moreover, real faith and love produce a hunger and thirst for more and more wisdom from above, and on the revealed Word of His grace: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." The foolish Virgins without oil in their vessels are results of ready acceptance of the teachings of unfaithful stewards. A wrong state of heart obtains with both, and which is at variance with the professed belief.

The narrative of the Ten Virgins in exactly forecasting and delineating the Second Advent Movement, and in disclosing its two sections of wise and foolish, could not without confusing the central subject connect the foolish Virgins with any outside associations. It could only reveal the one cause for being foolish, and this as lack of consuming desire for understanding of due truth. But in the parable of the steward and Luke 12: 45, last clause, another associated cause is presented with the unfaithful steward: "And to eat and drink and to be drunken." In Matt. 24: 49, a parallel parable, the rendering is, "And to eat and drink with the drunken." In the illustration the steward is presented as being appointed over the food of the household, to provide for all their portion at proper times. In thus giving to others of the household that which is placed in his charge, there is "eating and drinking" within the household of the provision of the absent lord. But the eating and drinking and being drunken, resulting from a wrong state of heart, is with others outside of the lord's household and a totally different kind of food and drink.

The primary purpose of the parable of the steward, in Luke 12: 42-48, is to display the steward class of the whole Age, and in the associations of the illustrative lord's return. The differences with the other servants of the household and the steward during the time of the lord's absence, and at his return, are matters considered later in this section. These different times, in the reality

of the Kingdom, are those of the long period of Waiting, and the considerable but much shorter period of Watching. It is only during this latter period that any of the other servants of the lord's house share with the unfaithful steward in "Eating and drinking with the drunken." And, in turn, this feature, with others of the household and at the time of the lord's return, could not be displayed in the parable of the steward without confusion, but is made manifest in the foolish Virgins of the exact narrative of Matt 25: 1-13. By retaining and believing human traditions and false theories of the Divine purpose every professed believer in the One Hope is eating and drinking with the drunken. This One Hope and associated Due Truth separates all true believers from religious systems of all kinds and brings them into a standing apart. This latter, with the last of the wise Virgins, is, as we have traced previously, that of the "Sea of glass" and of exceptional victory. Stewards that resist and oppose the Due Truth sent to make ready for His coming are directly responsible for the many sects of Second Adventists which retain the many opposing traditions of men.

Not only in His parables but in historical forecasts of literal things, and summaries of past events, Christ employs the term "Eating and drinking" as a definition of religious worship. In Matt. 24, 38 this term is used of the idolatrous worship of the people of the days of Noah. In Luke 17: 27, 28 it is employed in a like connection with the inhabitants of Sodom in the times of Lot and Abraham, and as contributing to the destruction with fire from Heaven. And in 1st Cor. 10: 3, 4, the worship of the true God by Israel during the wilderness journey, has the same definition of "eating and drinking." Nothing could be clearer than Christ's teaching in this connection, and nothing more marked than the two different kinds of religious worship within the Second Advent Movement, and pre-eminently with the last generation. This matter gives added force to the feature in the narrative of the Virgins, of the absence of converse with wise and foolish until after the Midnight Cry.

It is in agreement with connected prophecy of the Era of the Second Advent, that Christ's parables associate a drunken state as the prevailing one outside of His true household. The term **drunken** is selected and used by Christ as denoting and defining a muddled, confused state of mind on the subjects treated in Inspiration and on the Divine purpose with mankind and in His works. At Christ's appearing, this **drunken** state is universal save with the Company on the Glassy Sea, 144,000 Virgins not defiled and without falsehood in their "Mouth." This universally drunken state is not that of natural ignorance such as is unavoidable with all until removed by enlightenment, but like all intoxication with alcohol results from imbibing from without that which muddles and confuses the mind, as in Rev. 17: 2: "And the inhabitants of the Earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication."

Drunkenness, unlike sickness, does not merit sympathy, since it can be avoided by all. This has application to natural life and alcoholic causes of intoxication. Although it is not possible for any

within the area of the Kingdom or Divine cause on Earth to avoid being indoctrinated with false traditions of men on the Divine works and ways, special Divine provision has been made for sobering all willing to be delivered. The Time of the End marks—as noted several times—the unsealing of Truths hidden from all previous times; the making manifest to all willing to be taught “The Mystery of His Will.” This wonderful Due Truth has as its commencement the One Hope, as the antidote to the drunken theory of human immortality and its associated blasphemy of eternal torment for mankind. All sobered by this Hope are by it placed apart from the drunken on this feature, and where they can, if they will, be further led into the glorious truths provided by Divine beneficence for wise Virgins.

The one purpose of the Lord of glory in appointing stewards of the “mysteries of God,” as in 1st Cor. 4: 1, 2, was to give in the best form of service known and approved by Infinite wisdom, “Meat in due season” to His household. If the steward class of the early centuries of the Age had all realised the one purpose of their appointment, there would not have been the universal drunkenness at Christ’s return. Together with the parable of Matt 13: 24-30 treating on this matter there are such forecasts as that of Paul’s in Acts 20: 29, 30, and spoken to the Ephesians: “For I know this, that after my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” These wicked stewards—like living ones—only affected and drew after them those of the same state of heart, as defined and of the religious world of the last generation in 2nd Tim. 4: 3: “After their own desires shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears.”

By restoring the One Hope and revealing the abundant treasures of His glorious purpose, during the Time of the End, the gracious Lord has fully provided for the removal of drunkenness. But again, as at the commencement, unfaithful stewards are responsible for as they are approved and followed by foolish Virgins. And the preaching of all these stewards makes manifest that they are eating and drinking with the drunken with all their followers. Not any of these would thus believe and act if they had the tremendous fact of the impending return of Christ uppermost in their hearts.

The unexpected return of the illustrative lord to the unfaithful steward presented in Luke 12: 46, has in the reality of the Kingdom a remarkable fulfilment with the foolish Virgins, including their stewards, in their sudden realisation of being Unready when the Midnight Cry goes forth. “The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unfaithful.” The imposing of this extreme punishment by the illustrative lord is in agreement with his rights over his own slave, and has the significance of immediate death. Neglect of the household and its food provision; usurping the lord’s authority over the other servants in beating them, and eating and drinking with the drunken outside of the lord’s house, are offences that merit—in

the lord's estimate—the immediate destruction of the steward. This matter with the wicked steward is further commented on by Christ in Luke 12: 48, together with the lesser punishment on other servants for less offences and with less responsibility. "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required."

In the great reality illustrated in these features, there is the bringing in at the real Lord's return, and for His judgment, of all the wicked stewards of His absence as well as of the living unfaithful stewards. This "bringing in" does not signify restoring any of these from death. Indeed the "Cutting in sunder" of wicked stewards of previous generations by Christ at His return, is marked in these being refused resurrection at His coming and review. And all these wicked stewards of previous generations refused resurrection by the Lord are the "Unbelievers or unfaithful" referred to in Luke 12: 46, last clause, whose state is to be shared by the stewards responsible for the false beliefs and standing of foolish Virgins. "And will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers or unfaithful." The actual cutting in sunder only obtains with the living at Christ's return, but includes all dead of the same class, in the decreeing of the continuance of death for the thousand years of the coming Age, and the Eternal loss of the Celestial Glory of the Kingdom.

Since every generation of Christ's household has been comprised of believing men and women, then the mention of these in this parable as being ministered to by the stewards, includes all generations of the Age, "Menservants and Maidservants," as in Luke 12: 45. But the servants referred to in verses 47, 48 and some of which receive few or many stripes at their lord's return, are illustrations of the generations of the Waiting times, and not of the Time of the End or Watching Era. And this difference is connected with the matter of the faithful steward being the only one in this parable rewarded or promoted at the lord's return. Just as the privilege and responsibility of stewards differ greatly with those of others of the household, so with their reward if found faithful. The Lord of the household has reserved for all faithful stewards a particular reward in His glorious Kingdom. And this is one need for this parable of the steward. It may indeed be that the universal preaching work of the coming Harvest, indicated in Matt. 24: 14; Rev. 14: 6-9, will be solely the service of His true preachers of the Gospel Age, and a first portion of their reward. When the truth they have loved and ministered in is universally exalted on Earth, there will be with each of these preachers such delightful enthusiasm as only faithful preachers can experience.

But another matter arising out of this relates to the servants mentioned in Luke 12: 47, 48, and comprehending all generations of the Age to the Time of the end, but excluding those of the Second Advent movement of that Time. The exact parable of the Virgins treats on these last generations, and not with any of the preceding times. Thus, the parable of the steward in its section treating on other servants dealt with at the Lord's return, only refers to the generations of these living and dying before the Era of His return.

Concerning all these which continued in their Lord's house, none will be rejected on account of any lacks in laboring. These others of the household had neither the privileges nor responsibilities of stewards, but only of believing, holding fast, and in "waiting for His Son from Heaven" to occupy where He had placed each. As we have already noted, the "few or many stripes" in the matter of Luke 12: 47, 48, and with such of the waiting ones as the Lord regards as just, are matters of withholding and not of inflicting in the reality intended. "Least in the Kingdom," or limitation of dominion, obtains with "unprofitable" servants of the Waiting times whose faith in Christ is real and true. It is in the same connection of these servants of that long period that such Scriptures as 1st Cor. 3: 15 have application: "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." In verses 11, 12 of the same chapter there is the necessary explanation of the one foundation of Christ for every one of these Men to be built upon to thus be saved.

Profitable and unprofitable were divisions of the Waiting times, and not of Watching times. Wise and foolish are the divisions of the latter, and only of these. All who become wise Virgins are profitable in varying degrees, and all foolish Virgins are unprofitable and not acceptable. This latter is another difference with the unprofitable of previous times and when real faith and love in servants permitted overlooking lacks in labourers. The different conditions of life; the difficulties of obtaining light on the Divine Word and purpose when error was triumphant on Earth and in universal dominion, for most of the times of Waiting, are responsible for the Divine methods with these servants. The Time of the End is a period of liberty previously unknown, with material comforts and privileges the same. With the general increase and diffusion of knowledge, and the translation and circulation of the Scriptures in all languages, there has been the unsealing of the Mystery of the Divine Will in creation and redemption in the same wonderful Word of God to all that seek wisdom.

In the Divine estimate there is no excuse for being foolish Virgins. And there is not any distinguishing between unfaithful stewards and their followers, foolish Virgins, in being excluded from the Marriage and appointed to share with the "goodman" class the cutting off from life for the course of the coming Age. The daily pursuit of wisdom with all the wise according to their varying ability; the hunger and thirst with all these which is constantly being satisfied with good things by the Divine provision through His stewards, makes each profitable. All the wise Virgins are taken by the Bridegroom into the Marriage, and share His beneficent approval in varying degrees of authority, after receiving the one inestimable and indescribable Inheritance of His own Nature as a Gift of His grace and redemptive love. And all these wise Virgins know of the "Just and true ways" obtaining in the Divine dealings with all unfaithful stewards and foolish Virgins. They know that all these latter are included in their Song of praise: "For all

nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest."

With the faithful and wise steward as with the unfaithful one there is the dual significance and application in the beautiful words in Luke 12: 43, 44. In these also there is the intimation of living stewards ministering to the living household at the Lord's return, and of these being of the same class of faithful as those of the long time of His absence. The illustrative matter is beautiful, and how much more so is the reality intended in it! "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath." The contrast with this and the associations of the lord's return in the previous parable of the watching servants, serves to further display the exceptional matter of stewards. With the watchful servants and as in Luke 12: 37, "serving them with meat" is the evidence of the lord's delight with his slaves. But the steward found by the lord at his return ministering meat in due season to the household and thus watching, receives from his lord promotion to the most honored position that the lord can bestow on his servants.

Uninterrupted service of giving the meat in due season by the faithful and wise steward during the lord's absence and at his return, is comprehended in the matter of these two verses of Luke 12: 43, 44. The faithful steward of the parable, like the wicked steward, is a likeness to a class present in every generation of the Gospel Age, and actively engaged in this ministry all over the Earth at the Lord's coming. And the blessedness of all comprised in this one class of faithful stewards of the whole Age is brought at the one time of the Lord's return. Unlike the wicked stewards of all generations preceding that of His coming, the faithful ones of the same times are brought from death to their exceptional "promotion," before the returned Lord "promotes" the living stewards. Since the steward class is the one appointed by the Lord for the spread and maintenance of His cause during His absence, stewards are the ones intended in the several parables where "giving account" of talents and pounds is prominent. And the particular mention in the same parables of the Lord's words of commendation, and of "promotion" of the commended ones, agrees with the same matter in the parable of the steward. "Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath." A comparison of this matter in Luke 12: 43, 44 with Matt. 25: 21-23; Luke 19: 16-19, makes manifest the Lord's rewarding of faithful stewards, and the separating of this from His rewards to others of the household.

The very great difference between the appointed rulership of the steward during his lord's absence, and defined in Luke 12:42, and that bestowed at the lord's return, and specified in verse 44, was a prominent one in all households of Eastern lords. The position of steward given at the lord's departure to the one servant was that of having charge over the food of the household, with no authority over the other servants or over his lord's estate. In most households of

Eastern lords, and from ancient times, such a position as that first given at the lord's departure to one servant, was a subordinate one to that of another steward in charge of his lord's estate and household of slaves. This feature of Christ's parable—like all others—brings wondering appreciation of His matchless wisdom in the arrangements of His materials of illustration. His illustrations were not mere repetitions of human doings or customs, but of coming Eternal verities with believing mortals as their subjects. Christ's household is incomparable with any other, but for purposes of making manifest more clearly His exceeding and abundant recognition of faithful service, other households of human lords are utilised as tiny examples.

Thus, in this feature of the parable of the steward—of the subordinate position given at the lord's departure—there is the likeness with the Kingdom, in the difference with human customs of households. The one steward over the food of the household, and not over the other servants, is the order of the Divine cause during the real Lord's absence; a steward class in every generation. But the real Lord designs to bestow the higher stewardship on all in the subordinate position proving faithful during His absence. And like the illustrative lord in His parable He is more delighted in bestowing the higher position on faithful stewards than in first giving these the lesser position of ministering in the food of the household. "He will make him ruler over all that He hath." An illustration from ancient times of the exalted position indicated in this parable is presented in Gen. 24:2, and concerning the household of Abraham: "And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house that ruled over all that he had." In Gen. 15:2 this eldest servant's name is given as that of Eliezer.

Another and final feature of the parable of the steward presents another remarkable likeness with the faithful stewards of the Kingdom. The illustrative steward had not any intimation given him previous to his lord's return of any purposed promotion for faithful service during the lord's absence, and was not, therefore, influenced by self-interest in his faithful service. Affection for his lord and the other servants, earnest desire to prove himself worthy of the trust reposed in him by his lord, with interest in and affection for his appointed work, filled the mind and excluded all selfish desires and thoughts. And this is indeed a likeness with all faithful stewards in Christ's House; stewards of the mysteries of God, with greatly intensified realisation. No slave could ever love their human lord and owner like redeemed servants of the Lamb love Him, and the Father Who sent and gave Him, who have learnt of and entered into "the love that passeth knowledge." And Preachers of this love who are constantly finding more and more of its surpassing beauty and glory to tell to others are lost in wonder at the privileges given them in the present service of their absent Lord. No element of self-seeking can enter into the life's service of Christ's faithful stewards. Rather with each of these as with the humble and devoted Apostle to the Gentiles, Paul, there is the daily realisation of unworthiness of such privileges as are given to stewards in the present service. "I thank

Christ Jesus our Lord, Who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry" (1st Tim. 1: 12, 13).

Moreover, the exhortation of 1st Peter 5:6 from another of the first stewards of the Lord's house has appealed to every faithful steward in all times of the Age as most becoming, and as the only possible state of mind. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." And none wholly possessed with humility could seek any honours from men, nor have any thoughts of coming exaltation at the hands of God save as these were based on the wondrous Word of His grace which they love and teach. Every steward of Christ's true service, like the illustrative one in the parable, is also ignorant of his own coming promotion at his Lord's return. And this is true individually, although their substance of faith includes the knowledge of the wonderful exaltation awaiting all faithful stewards with all others of the house of Christ, when the glorious matter of 2nd Tim. 4:8 is accomplished. "Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."

The motive that prompted Christ in "giving Himself" for the reconciliation of all things is the pattern which all faithful stewards have had before their eyes and in their hearts, as expressed by Paul in 2nd Cor. 5:14, 15: "For the love of Christ constraineth us." Where fear of punishment or hope of reward has moulded the life's service, this likeness with Christ has been absent. Universal adoration of Christ, together with His exaltation to supreme power and authority, were foreknown by Him before and during His earthly life, but had no influence in His coming into the world, nor in His life's work of love. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye, through His poverty, might be rich" (2nd Cor. 8:9).

The humility and complete self-abnegation of this universal love of Christ finds further elaboration in Philip 2:5-11, with this commencement; "Let that mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Moreover, the new and delightful ideal of perfection in Eternal Life brought by Him Who purchased this boon for all sinners, is, with the believing section in the Celestial glory pre-eminently, that of being with and like Christ. To all these there is the promise, "I will come again and receive you unto Myself." To meet, to be with and like Him is the ideal of bliss and perfection, with all who have learnt of His love and responded to it. Each of these echoes the wondering words of delight of Paul in Gal. 2:20: "Who loved me and gave Himself for me." Each of these is thrilled with joy at the promises of 1st Thess. 4:17, 18: "To meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." This "greater" includes all the diversified lesser, such as personal perfection, the meeting with other redeemed and glorified ones, dominion and authority such as He appoints, and a place in the beautiful abode of the New Jerusalem. Every faithful steward, together with every member of Christ's House, is filled with praise and thanksgiving at the certain prospect of spending a delightful Eternity with Christ, and for a reconciled Universe through Him.

XII.

"BEHOLD THE FIG TREE AND ALL THE TREES."

In another section of this work we have noted the forecast by Christ of false prophets and their teachings within the Second Advent movement. And these are associations of the Time of the End down to His appearing, and deceive all save the very elect. Together with Christ's explanation of the notification of His return preceding His arrival to all in the Second Advent movement, and the description of His coming as being like a flash of lightning, there is in the same great Prophecy an infallible sign for faith as to the nearness of His approach. And this latter becomes most reasonable, and a necessity, as there is recognition of the terminus with the last community of believers. The "very elect" of Matt. 24:24 are the Wise Virgins of Matt 25:10; the Fulness of the Gentiles of Rom. 11:25; and the 144,000 Virgins of Rev. 14: 3-5. All these are to be brought to the one standing, with the one song of praise in their mouth. It is by this "Coming in," by learning the New Song which none others can, or will, learn, that all these Virgins are not only made Ready for the Bridegroom, but know of this standing of readiness. The need for being Ready was enjoined on all generations of believers by Christ, but only with this last one is there provided the New Song as marking an exceptional arrangement for making all its singers as Ready. With all others of previous generations and times the injunction to be ready included that also of "Be thou faithful down to death."

The sign which Christ gave as an infallible indication has a dual definition in Luke 21:28, 31, and is addressed to the "You" comprised in the Ready ones with the New Song: "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. So, likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the Kingdom of God is nigh at hand." The necessity for this dual mention becomes apparent by reading verses 25-27 as preceding the first reference in verse 28, and the parable of the Fig Tree and all the Trees in verses 29, 30 is succeeded by the second mention of the appointed sign in verse 30. So desirous was Christ for the You addressed and advised by Him to clearly understand the sign mentioned, that He gave a beautiful parable after the first reference to this sign, as definitely locating the time of its appearance.

The several signs of Luke 21: 25-27 contain the one intended by Christ for His watching people, a sign to faith. Most of the signs of these verses are for sight, and with the peoples of the Earth comprising the generation to witness the many Second Advent operations during the coming Harvest. As we have previously intimated, the Second Advent operations from Christ's coming as a Bridegroom, to His Revelation on the clouds of Heaven at the end of the Har-

vest, occupy—to our understanding—a period of some forty years. Signs in the Sun, Moon and Stars; the Sea and waves roaring; the shaking of the Powers of Heaven, and Christ's coming in a cloud with power and great glory, are all associations of the Second Advent which will be manifest to all then living on the Earth. These were not signs to faith, but necessary definitions of coming things, at the Era of the End of the Age.

But with these signs to sight there is twice mention in verses 25, 26 of the one sign for the faith of the "You" particularly addressed by Christ in this section of the Great Prophecy. "Upon the Earth distress of Nations with perplexity," is the reference in verse 25. In verse 26 the same matter is further elaborated "Men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the Earth." These two comprise the sign which, in verse 28, Christ refers to as evidence for His people. "And when these things begin to come to pass . . . your redemption draweth nigh" The "Things" Christ intended in this reference were the "distress of Nations," and not any of the other specified wonderful happenings. This fact—which will be more manifest in later tracings—discloses that the forecasted "distress of Nations" is to be an association of the Times just preceding Christ's return for His people. To be the one sign of His approach to the last of these latter proves that the universal distress commences before His return. This, in turn, entirely disassociates the "distress of Nations" from the times when the other signs to sight are being realised. The condition of the Nations when the signs in the Sun, Moon and Stars, etc., appear finds no mention in this section, but is elaborated in the parts of Inspiration treating the general subject of the Harvest.

Since it is true that "man is born to trouble," and that every generation of the whole Age, as well as the ones of the Time of the End, have had some "distress of Nations," the first reference to the particular one intended as an infallible sign for faith in Christ's coming needed further explanation. It is highly probable that previous generations of the Second Advent movement regarded the distresses of their times amongst the Nations as the matters of Christ's reference in Luke 21:25, 26. The Great War of 1914-1918, with its universal distress of Nations, was confidently regarded by many as the certain sign of Christ's approach, and as fulfilling prophecies of the conflict of Nations, which marks the end of war and the deliverance of Israel and Jerusalem.

Having first drawn the attention of the You addressed in the last generation of His people to the "distress of Nations" marked as the sign of His nearness, Christ proceeded to illustrate this sign in a parable, in Luke 21:29, 30. In a contemporary reference in Matt. 24:32, 33 there is mention of the "Fig Tree," but not as there is in Luke's account of "all the Trees," and there is the definition of the "shooting forth" of the Fig Tree and its extent in these words: "Now learn a parable of the Fig Tree; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh. So, likewise, ye, when ye see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." The absence of any mention in this account in Matthew of the particular "Things" as the sign intended, is supplied

in Luke 21:25, 26, and in the "distress of Nations with perplexity" as to its cause and outcome. In turn Matthew 24:32, 33 supplies to Luke's account the extent and nature of the Fig Tree's shooting forth.

"And He spake to them a parable: Behold the Fig Tree and all the Trees. When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the Kingdom of God is nigh at hand." This is the matter of Luke 21: 29-31, and the exposition of the previous sign of "distress of nations." It is manifest to careful thought that the previously-mentioned Nations in verses 25, 26 are "All the Trees" of the parable, and that their "shooting forth" is the distress of Nations of the previous literal reference. The only purpose of the parable was that of making manifest to intelligent faith the particular "distress of Nations" marking the sign of His coming and its Times. Thus, "All the Trees" of the parable of Luke 21:29 are the Nations of verses 25, 26, where distress prevails at the Era indicated by Christ.

But what of the Fig Tree to which Christ draws first and particular attention in the parable of Luke 21:29. "Behold the Fig Tree, and all the Trees"? A previous mention in age-lasting associations of these same Nations in verse 24 provides a first explanation of the Fig Tree and all the Trees of the parable. The afterward to Israel's rejection by Christ, and the destruction of Jerusalem, and for the whole Gospel Age, is presented in this verse. "And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led captive into all Nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the Times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." In this first mention of the all Nations with the captive people of Israel amongst them as a distinct people, there is only reference to the humiliation of the captive ones, and not of any distress of the all Nations. But in the second mention of the same Nations in verses 25, 26, there is the specifying of the distress of these, and without need for further particulars of the captive people to those of the previous verse. In the third mention of these all Nations in the parable of verse 29, and by the comparison of "all the Trees," there is urgent need to particularly draw attention to the "Fig Tree" as representing a new and wonderful change in Israel's standing amongst all the Nations. Her shooting forth is different to that of all the other Trees; it is the first signs of nationality for the Gospel Age, hence the distinguishing of the Fig Tree from all the Trees in Christ's parable.

But and since Christ had previously given as the sign for the faith of His living people "distress of Nations with perplexity," then the introduction of Israel as the Fig Tree shooting forth its tender branch, is the key to the particular and isolated distress of Nations intended by Christ. The rich symbolism of Inspiration employed the comparison of Trees to all the ancient Nations of the Gentiles, when Israel was compared to the "Vineyard of the Lord." The domain of these ancient Empires is also referred to in such Scriptures as Ezek. 31:8, 9, as Eden the garden of God, and in verses 16, 18 the Empires are referred to as "All the Trees of Eden," and as cedars and chestnuts. There is good reason for believing that the domains

of ancient Empires were the same as the Eden occupied by the Antediluvians, in which immense area, and as in Gen. 2:8, the "Garden of Eden" or Paradise was "Eastward in Eden." Once, and in the riddle of Ezek. 17:5, Israel, in her captivity in Babylon, is compared to a willow Tree, which comparison agrees with the prophecy of Psalm 137:1, 2, concerning the same captivity. "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof."

Historic Babylon was the first of the Four great Empires to have dominion on Earth for the "Times of the Gentiles," and to the establishment of the Kingdom of Messiah—the Fifth Empire. To the great King Nebuchadnezzar there was shown in the vision of Dan. 4: 10-13 the Tree of Gentile dominion, with a particular and luxuriant growth representing his dominion; and which was cut down but left the root bound with iron and brass to shoot again during later times. When Christ appeared in the world, and sowed in it, or in "the field," the Mustard seed of His new Kingdom, there was the small beginning of the ultimate of the parable of Matt. 13:31, 32: "Which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a Tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof." In this comparison and unlike the great Tree of Gentile dominion, not any beasts of the field are said to find shadow under it. (Dan. 4: 12, 21). This Kingdom raises all the redeemed creatures of God to an unfettered nature and life, like the birds of the air. Not any of its subjects continue bound with a body of flesh and in need of shelter and rest, for all likeness with beasts both bodily and morally is eternally removed. The different Branches of this Tree where the birds come and lodge, are the diversities of the Celestial and Terrestrial glories in the one Spiritual nature possessed by all the redeemed rational creation.

In the succeeding verse and in another parable, Matt. 13:33, Christ reveals the times during which the universal raising to an unfettered nature and life is fully accomplished: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." This Kingdom is new leaven and which purges out of the universe the old leaven of sin. The time measures of Three Ages are required for this and for bringing the end of, "Till the whole was leavened." These Ages are the domain of the Son, the Gospel Age, the Millennial Age, and the Age of Ages in the New Creation. During the first of these the Son is Prince at God's right hand, "Prince of the Kings of the Earth," as in Rev. 1: 5. For the two succeeding Ages He is King of Kings, with sole power in Heaven and Earth, and fully accomplishes the actual reconciling of all things purchased by the blood of His Cross. (Coloss. 1: 20; Ephes. 1: 10; 1st Cor. 15: 25-28).

In the comparison of the Kingdom to a Tree and its sowing in the field by the Son of Man, there is the associated one of all other Kingdoms of the Gentiles being Trees growing in the same big field of the World. In this comparison all the other Trees were in the

field with authority to bear fruit from the great Planter, when Christ sowed the mustard seed of His Kingdom. And the Nation of Israel, although subject to the Empire of Rome, had its authorities and a section of its people with the Priesthood and Temple in the land of Israel. Only this little Tree of Israel at the first Advent, as at the Era of Luke 21: 29, and when the Second Advent is at the door, has a distinctive name given to it in Christ's parables, "The Fig Tree." All Gentile Nations are embraced without definitions of names in the term, "All the Trees."

Before considering the first parable of the Fig Tree in the associations of the first Advent, it is interesting to observe the use and application of the term "Trees" to the Teachers of Israel, with a like application in the new Kingdom of Heaven planted by Christ. The Pharisees and Saducees, Teachers of the people of Israel, were the ones addressed, and the only ones intended in the words of John Baptist recorded in Matt. 3: 7-10: 'And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the Trees; therefore every Tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.' The good or corrupt fruit was for the sustenance of the people to whom these Teachers were Trees, and consisted of the Truth of the Divine Word or the traditions of men. In Mark 7: 6-13 there is the scathing rebuke of these Teachers by Christ, in the same connection. "In vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. Making the Word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered."

In Matt. 7: 15-20, and addressed to His own followers, Christ first warns them against false prophets and their "Fruits" or false teachings. He then brings the comparison of two kinds of Trees, good and corrupt, with two kinds of fruit, good and evil, and the repetition in verse 20, "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." If all believers were Trees these words would be meaningless. These two kinds of Trees within the new Kingdom of Heaven bearing good or evil fruit for others to partake of have exactly the same significance as the two kinds of stewards considered in the previous section of this work. The fruits of these which prove them good or corrupt Trees, faithful and wise stewards, or unfaithful and wicked, are the different messages they deliver. In verse 15 Christ warns against all personal appearances or profession, as any guide in this regard. "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." Appearances and professions are nothing, the manifest fruit is in the message brought, and this discloses also the condition of heart of the messenger. (Heb. 13: 7).

The Fig Tree of Luke 21: 29 is the same one as that of the parable of Luke 13: 6-9, but the former has reference to the Era of the impending coming of Christ, and the latter to the last year of Christ's ministry at His first appearing. It is certain that Christ intended, amongst other uses of the first parable of the Fig Tree, that of an accurate key to the second one presenting the infallible sign of His approach. "A certain Man had a Fig Tree planted in

his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold these three years I come seeking fruit on this Fig Tree, and find none; cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it. And if it bear fruit, well, and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down."

All this is so clear as to leave no room at all for doubt as to its meaning. This Fig Tree was the only one planted in the Vineyard; all the other Trees were outside in the field. Only from this Tree was there the looking for particular fruit after the three years' labours of the Dresser in tending it. And only with the same Tree was there the set limit of another year's special attention by the sympathetic Dresser, and which marked also the end of His service in the vineyard. The four years mentioned in the parable were the literal ones of Christ's ministry, which commenced in the associations of John 2: 13-25, and some six months before the first preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom in Galilee, recorded in Matt. 4: 12-17, Mark 1: 14, 15, Luke 4: 14-31. All these years were devoted to the people of Israel, to whom Christ was alone sent at this first appearing, as declared by Himself in the recorded words of Matt. 15:24.

But, unlike the comparison of the Teachers of Israel to Trees, and where rooting up is forecasted in Matt 15: 12-14, the barren Fig Tree of Israel was to be marked for cutting down, after the fourth year's labours of the devoted "Dresser." But so merciful was the Owner of the Vineyard that the "After that" of Luke 13:9 was some thirty-six years, and at the destruction of Jerusalem. These added years were particularly granted in the interests of constituents of the Fig Tree Nation resident in all the countries of the Gentiles, the whole House of Israel in its Twelve tribes. These scattered ones had not returned from the captivities of the two Houses or Nations in Assyria and Babylon. But all these—as evidenced by their Synagogues in the different Gentile Cities—were worshippers of the God of their fathers. All these scattered ones were known as Jews by the Gentiles, and are so referred to in the Inspired Word. Since all marks of the different tribes and Houses were removed, the name "Jews," like as in the coming Age, and in such prophecies as Zech. 8:23, has, since the captivities, applied to all the people or Children of Israel. When the Kingdom of Heaven was opened at Pentecost by the preaching of Peter, representatives of all the scattered Twelve Tribes were present, and are thus referred to in Acts 2:5: "And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every Nation which is under Heaven." As in verse 36, these comprised "All the House of Israel."

"After that thou shalt cut it down," when fully accomplished in the most awful experiences of human history, as in Matt. 24:21, 22, placed all Israel as captives in Gentile Nations and prohibited from entering the land of their fathers. "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a King, and without a Prince, and without a sacrifice," as prophesied in Hosea 3: 4, has full explanation in Luke

21:24, and in Rom. 11:25, as to the duration of the many days: "And shall be led away captive into all Nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the Times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." These Times have reference to the All Nations and their appointed dominion, with a particular application to the ending of the treading down of Jerusalem, as marking the beginning of the end of Gentile Times, with the full terminus later and in the Harvest. The associated reference in Rom. 11:25 has an altogether different significance in its mention of the "Fulness of the Gentiles coming in." As we have traced, this "Fulness" comprises the 144,000 Virgins of the last generation, and their "Coming in" is to participation in the New Song. Until this is fully accomplished, the captive people of Israel continue in their imposed blindness. But the same terminus is outlined in the sign of Luke 21: 28-31, and the full coming in of the fulness of the Gentiles, in Rom. 11: 25.

A cut-down Fig Tree, without any sign of National Life, has been the position of Israel for all the centuries of the Age from the first, until the past ten years, and during the absence of the "Dresser of the Vineyard." This tremendous fact of current history abundantly makes manifest that the right understanding of the parable of Luke 21:29 was only made possible to the living generation of believers, in conjunction with the explanatory matter of Matt. 24:32. "Behold the Fig Tree. . . When his branch is yet tender and putteth forth his leaves." And this is given by Christ as an explanation of His previous reference to "distress of Nations with perplexity" being the infallible sign of His approach: "Behold the Fig Tree." A Jewish State in Palestine again marks the presence of Israel as a Nation among all other Nations; the shooting forth of the previously cut-down Fig Tree, but only as a "tender shoot," and not as a vigorous growth. The parable, like the previous exhortation in Luke 21:28, stresses that the sign to faith of His approach is an early stage of the matters specified. "When these things begin to come to pass" is the sign in regard to the "distress of Nations," and not an advanced or acute stage. So with the Fig Tree and its appearance among the other Trees; "when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves," is the sign.

And here is the summary of the whole matter of Christ's infallible sign. The distress of Nations which arises universally, and apart from any known cause succeeding the commencement of a Jewish State in Palestine, is the matter of His exhortation and parable. Since 1920, and the British mandate over Palestine, the Fig Tree of Israel's nationality has been shooting forth. During the ten years or down to the early portion of 1930, generally prosperous conditions prevailed amongst civilised Nations. But a marked change has come to all Nations in economic depression of varying intensity, with vast numbers of unemployed in all Nations, and an anxious state of insecurity everywhere prevailing. Nothing could be more striking than the confirmation of Christ's words in reference to the prevailing depression: "Distress of Nations, with perplexity. Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the Earth." And these things in all Nations, and with a revived Israel now manifest, are the signs in the parabolic Trees.

parallel with the signs in natural Trees of approaching summer. Just as in the latter, the shooting forth of all Trees, including Fig Trees, indicates that "Summer is nigh at hand," so the different shooting forth of the parabolic Fig Tree, and of all the other Trees, is the infallible evidence that "The Kingdom of God is nigh at hand." In this matter of the sign, the nearness of summer shown in natural Trees has its parallel with the nearness of the Kingdom shown in Israel, and all Gentile Nations. Concerning real Trees and their shooting forth, Christ said in Luke 21:30: "When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh." There was not any need for Christ to tell them this; everyone knows it. But in His use of one Fig Tree, and all the other Trees as illustrations of revived Israel, and distressed Gentile Nations, at the particular Era indicated, there was urgent need for revealing that: "When ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the Kingdom of God is nigh at hand."

In Matt. 24: 32, 33, and in the same connection of the Fig Tree and the approach of summer, there is this reference: "Ye know that summer is nigh." But in the use of the Fig Tree as an illustration of Israel's first evidence of national life, and as a sign of the nearness of the Kingdom of God, there is a more intensive definition of time: "Know ye that it is near, even at the doors." This last clause is added to the declaration of being "Near." In this there is suggested that universal distress at the Era indicated marks the Kingdom of God as being nearer than the shooting forth of Trees does the approach of summer. The distinct matters of Luke 21: 28 and Matt. 24: 33 must be noted to make intelligible the different stages intended. In the first there is reference to the commencement of universal distress, and this as being known by the You addressed by Christ, but not understood as a sign by these until some time later. It is certain that previous to the present universal depression coming not any believers knew that this was the infallible sign of Christ being at the doors. Most enlightened believers in looking for universal distress as associated with the Time of Jacob's trouble, in agreement with Prophecy, also believed that the living people of Christ would be removed before this distress commenced. Hence the reference to this in Luke 21: 28: "When these things begin to come to pass, look up and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." This was an intimation that His people would experience with others the first stage of the universal distress. But the matter of Matt. 24: 33 is a later stage and has reference to the sign being seen by all the you addressed.

"So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." If indeed all comprised in these Ye—the Fulness of the Gentiles—have seen the things as the realised Sign of Christ, then the going forth of His notification cannot be even a matter of months, as this would make it longer in time than the sign of shooting Trees and the approach of summer. The use of the plural in this same reference has great significance: "Near, even at the Doors." There is indeed but One Door to the Kingdom of glory—that of John 10: 9—and spoken by Christ of Himself. And

the same One is also the Way, the Truth, the Life and the Resurrection, as He is the Redeemer, Saviour and Reconciler of all sinners. But there are as many doors as living persons on Earth to which the Kingdom is now near or "At," as further defined in Luke 21: 35: "For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of **the whole Earth.**" The Kingdom is now at the door of every one of these. Whether watching or indifferent this Kingdom is at the doors of all in the living generation, and notified to all by the existing universal depression. But the same mention of doors and of the One so near as to be "At them" brings prominent again a feature of the parable of Luke 12: 36: "That when He cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately." When He is at the doors He is about to knock. And in giving the infallible sign of this nearness even before His knock or notification in this literal forecast there is another wonderful and exceptional privilege granted the last generation of His people.

How wonderful it is also that until the universal depression now present on Earth came it was not possible for any to see the sign of the nearness of the Kingdom! And only by Christ's declaration can any living person know for certain that this depression has the Divine significance of a sign. In this, too, there is confirmation of the utter futility of all human calculations of Times, so fully displayed during the course of the Second Advent movement. The "Times of the Gentiles" in their true commencing date has greatly exercised the minds and influenced the beliefs and writings of many expositors during the course of the Time of the End. "God is His own interpreter, and He will make it plain." When the One who is now at the doors knocks, and returns, the Times of the Gentiles will be fully manifest, as also the commencement of the Time of Jacob's trouble.

The exceptional enlightenment brought by the parable of the Fig Tree and all the Trees makes for certainty of mind with all addressed in the previous exhortation of Luke 21: 28: "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for **your redemption draweth nigh.**" The daily expectation of Christ's notification becomes by this sign intensified. All the You addressed are those who know previous to the sign being recognised of this redemption, but only learn of its definite nearness of realisation by the sign given. But, just as it is certain that Christ's notification of approach is only waiting the completion of the "Fulness of the Gentiles," so this sign is the last intimation to all really desirous of "learning the new Song," and of thus coming in to this Fulness. During the years of the putting forth of the tender branch of the Fig Tree, or of the past ten years of Israel's national life in Palestine, this coming in of the Fulness of the Gentiles has been in process. The sign is primarily for those who have "come in" and know of their promised redemption. "Lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."

The matter of Luke 21: 28, second clause, has better rendering in critical Versions in "Raise yourselves and lift up your heads." In Luke 13: 11 the same Greek term is used in regard to the woman

with the infirmity: "And was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself." When Christ laid His hands on her there was the result of verse 13: "And immediately she was made straight, and glorified God." The existing universal depression is having the result, even at this first stage, not only of perplexity but also of "men's hearts failing them for fear." All those who have gotten the victory over prevailing false theories of the Divine Works and Ways are also victors in this domain of "distress of Nations" and its depressing influences. And when the infallible sign both appears and is recognised by these victors there is added cause for unbending or raising and for lifting up the head.

In the application of the parable of Luke 21: 29, 30, in verse 31 there is in the sign expounded the declared nearness of the **Kingdom of God**. But in verse 28, last clause, the exceptional and particular matter only relating to the **You** addressed finds reference: "For your redemption draweth nigh." Not only does the sign given indicate that the Kingdom is nigh, at the doors, but also that "Your redemption draweth nigh." The Kingdom's nearness is of tremendous importance—although unrecognised—to all the dead in Christ of all previous generations, but not any of these are included in the "**Redemption**" which is also Nigh when the Kingdom is at the doors. How accurate are the terms of Inspiration and how carefully worded! It is not said that **Redemption** is at the doors, but that the One coming in His Kingdom is. Moreover, since this Redemption only relates to the living ones of the last generation of believers, to whom the sign of approach is also given and appeals, it is defined as "**Your redemption**."

The term **Redemption** has the meaning of Ransom, and "redeem" as ransom by payment. As declared in 1st Tim. 2: 6, and in agreement with the glorious Song of the Lamb which we have considered, Christ Jesus "gave Himself a Ransom for all." All are thus the redeemed of the Lord, and marked for Eternal Life at the appointed Times and by the several Ways of Life of the Divine Plan. In Ephes. 1: 7, and another matter of redemption, there is a definition which has application to every true believer of the Gospel Age. "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." This latter, unlike the redemption of Luke 21: 28, and which draweth nigh with Christ's appearing, has been the lot of all Christ's people right through the Age of His absence. In Ephes. 1: 14 there is this beautiful reference: "Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory." This last clause defines what the purchased possession is, as also the matter of verse 12: "That we should be to the praise of His glory who first trusted in Christ." Christ purchased the Celestial Glory for all His believing people, as He did the Terrestrial Glory for all rational creatures outside of His little family of Children of God by faith in Him. The earnest or pledge of the "purchased possession" of the Celestial glory, for the whole of the present Age and with all true believers, is that of Ephes. 1: 13, last clause: "In Whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." This purchased possession has its full redemption when Christ

appears and accomplishes the investing with the Celestial Glory of all previously sealed with the Spirit of promise.

Another reference in Ephes. 4:30 becomes intelligible in its meaning by the matters just noted in Ephes 1:14: "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." This Day, which commences at Christ's return as Bridegroom, and first brings into the Celestial Glory all the family of faith, lasts for two Ages, and is throughout The Day of redemption to all the redeemed and reconciled creatures of God. In other Scriptures it is referred to as the "Day of Christ, the Day of the Lord Jesus," and is indeed the best and most glorious of the Days of the Divine Times commencing at creation. Still another reference to redemption, with its own particular meaning, is presented in Rom 8:23. In previously making reference to the past and present groaning and travailing in pain of the human creation the Apostle adds: "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body."

In human life and affairs the matter of Adoption is that of taking one born of other parents as the child of the one adopting, and the conferring of the rights and privileges on the adopted one of a natural born child. Together with making those adopted into God's family His heirs, as declared in Rom. 8:17, there is the imparting of His own nature to all these, and which is impossible in any human adoption of the child of another. In Heb. 2:10 there is one reference in this connection to the Divine adoption and its means of accomplishment: "For it became Him, for Whom are all things, and by Whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering." Not any of these sons are perfect; only by the perfection of their Captain or Prince being imputed to them, and received through their faith in His faith, are these brought to the glory of His and the Father's nature. All these sons are members of the one body, of which Christ is the One Head. The redemption of this one Body, which brings salvation or deliverance to every member at Christ's descent, brings the full "Adoption" or Sonship. Until then the One Body is not redeemed. It is for the redemption of this One Body into the nature of Christ and the Father, and not for the redeeming of any bodies of flesh, that there is reference in Rom. 8:23: "The redemption of our body."

Together with these diverse but connected matters of redemption there are the many references to the Salvation of all comprised in the One Body and sharing the Adoption of Sons of God. This term "Salvation" signifies deliverance, safety, and is the individual portion of all those sharing the various matters of the Divine redemption which we have considered. It was the "Great Salvation" which Christ first preached, and which is provided for all His approved people. It is concerning the Gospel Age and this exceptional Salvation that there is reference in 2nd Cor. 6:2: "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." This Great Salvation is limited in its offer to human faith to the Gospel Age. In other Scriptures the same Salvation is referred to as being in

process with its privileged subjects right through their lives, and as being fully consummated at Christ's appearing. In Rom. 13:11 there is this reference: "And that knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our Salvation nearer than when we believed." And in 1st Peter 1:9, where the matter and associations of Christ's appearing are the central theme, this terminus is defined: "Receiving the end of your faith, even the Salvation of your souls." It is the Soul or person and not the human body that receives by Resurrection the Great Salvation at the appearing of Christ. All Resurrection is of Souls clothed with new Spiritual bodies, whether of the Celestial or Terrestrial glories.

It is by recognition of these Scriptural references to Redemption and Salvation, and their application to all past generations of Christ's people, that the isolated and exceptional matter of Christ's words in Luke 21: 28 and to the living believers at His return, makes powerful appeal. "For Your Redemption draweth nigh." This Redemption is not only to the same Adoption and Salvation as that of all other and previous members of the One Body, but it is from that which none others had been redeemed. All previous generations are to share redemption and salvation from death and the grave. But the Divine purpose requires that those addressed by Christ in Luke 21: 28 shall share Eternal Salvation in the Celestial glory by exceptional redemption from the Earth and from among men without death.

It is then by the sign of Luke 21:28 that certainty can be arrived at as to the exact time when the sign of the Glassy Sea commences realisation, or when the promised freedom from the necessity of death dates its beginning to all singers of the New Song. Such a terminus is a necessity to making the sign of Rev 15: 2 a realised matter. As previously traced, Israel's first signs of Nationality or, as in Christ's parable of the Fig Tree putting forth its tender branch, has been in process for the past ten years. And during the same years there has been the "coming in of the fulness of the Gentiles," or the learning of the New Song. But not until the present year, 1930, did the universal depression commence which Christ drew attention to as the infallible sign of the nearness of the Kingdom. And not until the latter portion of the same year, and when it was manifest to all the living that the distress of Nations was really universal, was Christ's sign in Luke 21: 28-31 fully manifest to all the "You" addressed by Him. It is in the same associations that Christ gave authority for certainty as to the promised and exceptional redemption to all singers of the New Song. Previous to the time marked in Christ's sign no living believer had authority from Him of certain redemption from death, but such as were instructed concerning it could only hope that they might be privileged to share it.

Not until Christ definitely promised this redemption in the words of Luke 21: 28, and at the time unmistakably marked in His sign, was there provided certainty to all those in the standing of the Glassy Sea. "When these things begin to come to pass, raise yourselves and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh," is indeed thrilling to all enlightened believers. It guarantees

to each of these a part in the redemption by designating it "**Yours**," and this apart from the imposing on any of these any further conditions to be observed for participation. All addressed by Christ in these words have learned of the redemption promised them from the sections of Inspiration expounding it, and are all singers of the New Song. All these know who the "**Fulness of the Gentiles**" are—referred to in Rom. 11:25—the "**Mortal**" of 1st Cor. 15:53, 54, to put on Immortality at the last Trump, when the Corruptible puts on Incorruption, and the "**We which are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord**" to be caught up to meet the Lord. They know, too, that the wise Virgins of Matt. 25:10 to enter the Marriage without death are the same persons as the 144,000 Virgins of Rev. 14:1-5; Rev. 15:2-4. But all this enlightenment has not conferred on any believer the certain knowledge of their own participation in the exceptional redemption. Not until the time arrived in human affairs on Earth, when Christ's sign was both realised in universal depression and recognised by all the "**You**" addressed, can each of these latter know for certain that the redemption is theirs.

And such certainty brings at once the conscious recognition of their personal lacks, of being unworthy of such a wonderful standing and of doing nothing to merit it. It is to meet this inevitable result with each of the "**You**" receiving the promise and guarantee of Luke 21:28—**Your redemption draweth nigh**—that Christ adds the later matter of verse 36: "**Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.**" In this added matter there is confirmation of what the previously promised Redemption is from and to. It is from the Earth and its universal distress and to a standing before the Son of Man. Like the promise of Luke 21:28: "**Your redemption draweth nigh**," so with the added matter of verse 36: "**That ye may be accounted worthy to escape.**" Both references have application to the same persons at the same eventful period of time, and this latter is the present time, this latter part of 1930. How long before the One Who is "**at the doors**" will knock and thus end the present state of affairs, is only known to Him.

But what a wonderful demonstration of the truthfulness of Heb. 1:2 is presented in the message of Christ to living believers at this portion of 1930 in Luke 21:28-31, 36: "**Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son**"! Not until Christ—the Master of the House—gave to each living singer of the New Song the authority for regarding the exceptional redemption from death as **their certain portion**, had any person the right to believe that this marvellous standing is theirs. And Christ spake these words to this living generation some nineteen hundred years ago, but foreknew that they would not and could not be fully apprehended as His guarantee until the appointed time of the present Era arrived. As with the promise and guarantee of Luke 21:28, "**Your redemption draweth nigh**," so with the added matter of verse 36. This watching and praying always to be accounted worthy of the promised redemption is the only exhortation of its kind, and is to the only ones definitely promised a part in the redemption. All other appeals

for watching and to those living during the Time of the End, like that in Mark 13: 25-37, are associated wholly with the matter of Christ's return. But the matter of watching and unceasing prayer comprised in Luke 21:36 is that of those previously guaranteed the exceptional redemption, and for their own strengthening, assurance and comfort: "That ye may be accounted worthy to escape . . . and to stand before the Son of Man."

In the Divine estimate all those addressed by Christ in His promise and guarantee of Luke 21: 28 are "accounted worthy" of the promised redemption, since these are in a victorious standing by praising Him with the New Song. Since faith alone is the means of receiving the grace of God, then that which is believed and confessed before God makes each worthy in His sight. None could ever be accounted worthy by presumed personal merit or services. But the very mention by Christ in Luke 21:36 and to those sharing His promise of redemption, of being accounted worthy, confirms the position of being unworthy with all save the learners of the New Song, in agreement with Rev 14:3, 4. And with all these singers it only requires the same faith in Christ's promise of their certain redemption, as that obtaining with the themes of the New Song, to produce in each the unceasing watching and prayer enjoined by Christ in Luke 21:36. "Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape the things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." How very beautiful and inspiring these words become when their true place and significance are correctly understood!

The endearing name of "The Son of Man" is the designation used in this connection of the realised redemption of these last of His people, as it is in so many other connections which we have previously noted. And in this form of address, as in other associations considered by us, Christ does not refer to Himself by the personal pronouns "I," or "Me," or "Myself," but by His redeeming name of Son of Man. Exactly the same matter of the standing of the redeemed ones after their escape from the Earth and from among men, is the theme of Rev 14:1, and which has been considered in another section of this Work. But in this Scripture and unlike the use of Son of Man in Luke 21:36, the designation used of Christ is that of "The Lamb," and which is an intensified form of "Son of Man." "And I looked, and, lo, The Lamb stood on the Mount Sion, and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads." Some further considerations in the connection of this accomplished redemption to those already presented seem necessary in concluding both this section and work.

Just as the redemption and standing with the Lamb of this last company is altogether exceptional in the Divine purpose of the present Age, so with the presentation of this in Rev. 14:1. The terminus with these is the first matter recorded of them, and not any others sharing the "Great Salvation" with these redeemed ones are mentioned in this section of Inspiration. The connecting of this final standing with the previous earthly life of all its subjects, and

the making manifest of its great cause, is the matter of verses 3-5, and which has received considerable attention in another section of this work. But the uniform use of the past tense in the diverse features of these verses is intelligible when they are recognised as relating to matters transpiring previous to the time commencing with the standing on the Mount Zion. In the contemporary matter of the singing of the new Song, and where its themes are defined and distinguished, in Rev. 15' 2-4, there is the use of the present tense because the whole matter treated relates to the Earthly life and standing of the Victorious singers. But in both references to these singers—in Rev. 14' 3-5 and Rev. 15' 2-4, the same stage of learning and singing the new Song is the one of their introduction into the Sacred Narrative and not any earlier one. So long as any human theories of the Divine Works and Ways remained in the minds of these, and were expressed by their mouths, no mention is made of them.

How powerfully this matter of learning the new Song with this company of the last generation, and of the testing of all the living by the attitude manifested to the same Song, distinguishes the Divine tests of faith with the different generations of the Time of the End! The matter of "meat in due season"; of the truth for the times; of the different phases with each generation of the one matter of Dan. 12:10, "The wise shall understand," all receive unmistakable display in the recorded matters with the last company of Christ's people. Not until these learn the New Song do they find mention as being marked for exceptional redemption from the Earth and among men, and as being the only undefiled ones of living mankind without falsehood in their mouth. "These are the first and only ones to learn the new Song defined in Rev. 15' 2-4; the only Victors of all generations of believers over all opposing human theories of the Divine Purpose. But the same gracious Spirit that leads all the Victors to the standing of the Glassy Sea, and promises each of these a part in the glorious redemption from the Earth, would have led many more of our generation to the same if they "Could have learnt the new Song."

The matter of Rev. 14: 1, 2 has application to the realised redemption of the one company referred to, and is identical with Christ's words in Luke 21: 36, last clause—"to stand before the Son of Man." This explains the use of the term "The Mount Zion" to the place of their standing, and of this being located in Heaven and not on Earth. The same name of Mount Zion has been associated with the historic city of Jerusalem from the time of David. This was on account of Jerusalem being the seat of Divine worship instituted by Jehovah, and the Metropolis of the Kingdom of Israel or a Kingdom of God from the giving of the Law at Sinai to its destruction in A.D. 70. The name of Jerusalem being given to this city, and the frequent reference to the same city as the "daughter of Zion," or of Jerusalem, further discloses its connection with the Heavenly Zion and Jerusalem, the House or City of Jehovah.

In Psalm 2: 6, and at a later period than that of Rev. 14: 1, although probably not more than ten years later, the standing as

King of the same Person spoken of as the Lamb in Rev 14: 1 is associated with the Earthly Sion. "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Sion." The difference between "The Mount Sion" in Rev. 14:1 and the "holy hill of Sion" in Psalm 2.6 is that of the Heavenly and Earthly Cities of the same name, as the distinct matters of each are in their times of accomplishment. And the real glory and splendour of Earthly Sion and Jerusalem, as a small reflex of her Heavenly Mother, is not in the past but in the impending future of the coming Age, and finds frequent reference in the Prophets. "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole Earth is Mount Zion, on the sides of the North, the City of the great King." (Psalm 48 2.) In Zech. 14.3-5 there is the forecast of how Jerusalem ceases to be trodden down of the Gentiles, and becomes the City of the great King. "The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with Thee." This coming of the Lord with all the saints from the Mount of Zion above to the Mount Zion beneath is contemporary with the Era of Rev. 14: 6-9. It is as the result of this coming that Messengers of the new King and Kingdom go forth with a new Gospel, "To all that dwell on Earth, even to every Nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people"

Only in the one matter of Rev. 14:1 is there any reference in the Apocalypse to "The Mount of Sion," and the important need for this becomes manifest to careful thought. In verse 2 there is the mention of Heaven in the same connection as the Mount Sion in the first verse, and of the ravishing melody heard by John proceeding from it. This presents further evidence of the Home of the Almighty being intended in Rev. 14:1, 2. In many Scriptures "Heaven" is the term used in definition of the great centre of the Universe, where the particular abode of the Almighty is located. This is the "Heaven of Heavens" above the Firmament or Heaven of the Earth, and to comprise the Third and Eternal Heaven to the New Earth, when the second and existing one has been dissolved in the mighty Lake of fire, the Second death. Just as it is impossible for mortals or flesh creatures to enter this glorious Home of God on account of the character of its uncreated light, as in 1st Tim 6:16, so it is not possible for the same light to illuminate the Earth until the human race are made in the second resurrection spiritual beings.

But in such Scriptures as Rev. 14: 1, Heb. 12:22, the reference to Mount Zion is to a particular part of the vast domain of the Heavens of Heavens, and finds illustration with the earthly Zion and Jerusalem. This latter does not comprise even the whole of the Holy Land, much less the whole Earth, but only that of the enlarged and exalted Millennial City. The standing on Mount Sion with the Lamb of the redeemed ones of Rev. 14: 1, is not only in Heaven but in a particular part and where the Lamb has been since His Ascension. The same definiteness obtains with the reference in Heb. 12: 22: "But ye are come unto Mount Sion, the City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." This is far more definite and eloquent than saying that "ye are come unto Heaven," since it relates to Heaven's Metropolis and the place of the Divine Presence.

During the Gospel Age and Christ's absence in Heaven he has not only been on Mount Zion, and in the City of the Living God—the Heavenly Jerusalem—but he has been seated with the Father in His Throne in that Metropolis of the Universe. And it is there where He conducts His “flock” after meeting them in the Air above the earthly Mount Zion. In the matter of Rev. 14:1 and the mention of the Redeemed ones from the Earth and from among men, **Only**, there is but the completion of the one subject of the section devoted to its exposition, in verses 1-5. The “flock” of the Lamb conducted by Him to Mount Zion comprises a “Great Multitude which no man could number,” as their totality is not revealed. If the Redeemed ones of Rev. 14.1-5 were not exceptional in their experience of meeting the Lamb, then this section of Inspiration would not have been needed nor written. The comprehensive one of Rev. 7 9-17 includes all sharing the Adoption and Great Salvation of the whole Gospel Age, and presents these on The Mount Zion and as **standing** before the Throne and before the Lamb. Not only is the particular matter of Rev. 14 1, 2 but one part of this general Assembly, but the “**Loud voice and praise**” of the whole glorified Multitude recorded in Rev. 7 10 is the same matter as that of Rev. 14:2. These are the words of praise in the one Scripture. “And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb” And this is the further presentation of the same matter in the particular section of Rev. 14.2, without mention of the themes of praise. “And I heard a voice from Heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of great thunder; and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps”

That the reader of this exposition, with the writer, may now be amongst the privileged singers of the new Song, and partaker of Christ's promise and guarantee, “that your redemption draweth night,” is our final and sincere word of affectionate exhortation.

“A little while, and He shall come;

The hour draws on apace—

The blessed hour, the glorious morn,

When we shall see His face.

How light our trials then will seem!

How short our pilgrim way!

Our life on Earth a fitful dream,

Dispelled by dawning day!”

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